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**A.49B - PRAYER TO BE SAID MORNING AND EVENING
BEFORE THE EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE**

I adore You, Most Holy Trinity, one God in three Persons, and I thank You for all the graces that, in Your goodness, You have bestowed upon me. I give You my heart and all that I possess so that henceforth I may accomplish Your holy will.

Grant me the grace, I beg of You, my God, to spend this day without offending You and without wronging my neighbor. Help me to recognize my sins and move me to contrition for having offended You, my God, who are so good. Have mercy on us because of the merits of the Precious Blood of my Savior. Have mercy on us and on all souls immersed in mortal sin so that, having obtained mercy, they may praise You eternally.

PERIOD BETWEEN 1647 AND 1660

**A.85 - (INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SISTERS WHO WERE SENT
TO MONTREUIL)**

(1647)

Our Sisters Anne Hardemont¹ and Marie Lullen² are going to Montreuil in order to discover what Divine Providence wishes them to do there.

First and foremost, they must remember to keep in mind God and His glory. Then they must consider the welfare of the people with whom they will be associated in order to serve them better according to their aptitudes.

Thirdly, they shall remember that none of their actions among themselves or with externs should be prejudicial to the Company of the Daughters of Charity because we must honor God in the interest of the Company.

Above all, they shall beware of crediting to themselves the least portion of the works in which God does us the honor of employing us. This can come about through vain complacency, satisfaction, or self-serving plans; all things which we must renounce often.

1. Anne Hardemont, see Letter 110.

2. Marie Lullen, see Letter 182.

En route, they shall be as exact as possible in the practice of their Rule. If they cannot make their morning meditation before leaving, they shall make it without fail while in the coach. Before leaving their bedroom, they shall make an act of adoration. In the evening they shall make their examen while kneeling.

They shall take a book along with them in order to read in the coach. They shall try to keep their exercises private and shall avoid bothering others in the coach.

They shall guard against uttering improper, careless or idle words, and against any unbecoming action. In order to prevent this, they shall watch over one another in order to give a charitable warning if a sister accidentally forgets herself. The sister given the warning shall willingly accept it even if she is not aware of her fault.

If they have the opportunity to say a few good words to some poor person or to the servants at the inns, they should do so with humility, never mocking the person's ignorance.

After leaving the coach, before thinking about eating, they shall go to the nearest church to adore God in the Blessed Sacrament.

They shall make the same act of adoration in every village through which they pass. They shall acknowledge the guardian angel of each town and the guardian angel of each soul living there in order to commend them to their protection for the glory of God.

If they are able to do so before the coach departs in the afternoon, they shall visit some of the sick or the hospital, if there is one in the village.

Arriving at Montreuil, they shall go directly to the church and then to the Château to pay their respects to the Governor [the Count de Lannoy] telling him that they are there to receive his orders.

They shall remember that true Daughters of Charity must be united in order to fulfill God's expectations. Because our corrupted nature has deprived us of this perfection, and since sin separates us from our unity which is God, following the example of the Blessed Trinity, we must have but one heart and act with one mind as do the three divine Persons. We must do this in such a way that, when the sister in charge of the sick requests the help of her sister, the sister who instructs the children shall readily comply. And, if the sister in charge of the children requests assistance from the sister in charge of the poor, she shall do likewise since both tasks are equally the business of God. Considering themselves both chosen by Divine Providence in order to act in unison, we hope never to hear the words, "That is your business, not mine."

If they are housed outside of the hospital, they shall not go to the hospital unless the Count orders them to do so.

If they are housed at the hospital and their only task seems to be the service of the poor of the city, and, nonetheless, the Count wishes them

to take charge of the school for girls and the care of the sick of the hospital as well, then they shall comply and shall not involve themselves in other things.

Should the Count request that they tell him all that happens at the hospital, then they shall do so with great prudence and charity.

Prudence consists in speaking about important matters only and not relating a lot of trifles that are not worth saying. That which you feel obliged to say should be expressed in as gentle a manner as possible, remembering that what seems evil is often so only in our feelings and opinions. In order to avoid conflict with the women and girls who have run the hospital for a long time, our sisters must have great respect for them and manifest great love and cordiality toward them. The sisters shall do nothing without their permission, not even take a pot, a frying pan, or anything else for their own needs.

In this matter, they shall remember the instruction and example of our Most Honored Father: that they shall enter this house prepared to suffer and to humble themselves beyond all their expectations. This they can do by apologizing to persons apparently angry with them even if they did not provoke this anger.

If some of these good women and girls get the idea that you are there to dismiss them and send them away, in the name of God, my Sisters, bear with such little suspicions, but prevent them as much as you can from arising by showing submission and cordiality in your words and actions. Consider that, in reality, you must respect these good persons as your mothers and as persons chosen by God to begin this work and to administer it so well during all these years.

Never respond to any complaints or reproaches that they may address to you. Although you are assured that the Count will provide for all your needs, do not take advantage of this, and bear in mind that you are there on a trial basis. If these good girls do fairly well and you, on the contrary, are at odds among yourselves and exhibit discord, you shall most certainly be sent back. This fact shall oblige you to act always with purity of intention, only looking upon God with more humility, mistrusting yourselves and trusting in God so that, if we are sent back, we shall be able to believe that it is the will of God; that it will not harm the Company or give bad example to anyone.

Consequently, you must go there with the intention of accomplishing the will of God manifested through the will of the Count; and in order to obey the Count more perfectly, you shall consider him in God and God in him. Remember that such is the teaching of our Most Honored Father and that, perhaps, he owes the great blessings he has received from God to this holy practice.

In his goodness, the Count will often speak freely with you; be careful to show respect always and to be reserved in your speech. Above all, my

dear Sisters, if God should allow some small disputes between you, never mention the matter to him or to anyone else. And, if you have grounds to complain about one another, never allow it to appear on the outside.

It is most necessary that you never say anything rude to one another, especially in front of externs. With the help of God, your charity will prevent your being unpleasant with one another.

The close union that should exist between you shall be maintained by mutual forbearance with one another's failings and by the account you give of what you have done, where you have gone, or where you are going during the day. When some difficulty arises in your exercises, for example when the sister in charge of the sick, or she who is in charge of the children experiences some doubt, you shall talk it over together. As soon as you have found a solution, both of you, if possible, shall discuss it with the Count or with the Superioress, if there is one.

You are to conduct yourselves simply, according to the practice common to Paris and other places. However, if someone wishes you to act otherwise, you shall follow their orders so long as they are not offensive to God. Recall the same practice of our Most Honored Father who believes that the advice of others is always worth more than his own.

One of the great needs of our sisters is that they satisfy the people, and in this way God will bless their work and it will result in His Glory. This need is encountered everywhere, but especially there where the people are extremely fond of the hospital. Great gentleness and cordiality are necessary in order to win over these people. That is why it would be well if every morning each sister would individually pray (so as not to multiply the prayers said under the Rule) for the blessing of our good God in order that they might act in the manner of His Son while He was on earth as they carry out the works of charity to which they have been called. Better yet, they should pray that the same Spirit that acted in Him should act through them. They should begin their day by reflecting that they are accompanied by Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin and their guardian angel. It would also be well to have devotion to the guardian angels of all the souls in the city.

Our sisters shall be mindful to show great respect to priests, particularly to the chaplain of the hospital to whom they should show no familiarity. If necessity requires them to speak to him, they shall always do so together or in the company of another person. They shall take the parish priest as their confessor, believing that they will always find a blessing in remaining obedient.

As for your conduct toward the sick, may you never take the attitude of merely getting the task done. You must show them affection; serving them from the heart; inquiring of them what they might need; speaking to them gently and compassionately; procuring necessary help for them without being too bothersome or too eager. Above all, you must have

great care for their salvation, never leaving a poor person or a patient without having uttered some good word. When you meet someone who appears quite ignorant, have them make acts of faith, contrition and love; for example, "I believe all that the Holy Church believes, and I wish to live and to die in this faith." At other times, it would be well to have such persons recite separately the principal articles of our faith.

They shall not forget to give a report of the expenditures for their trip and any money remaining to the Count. If they are housed separately, either in or outside the hospital, their expenditures are to be taken care of by the Count and kept separate from other accounts. If they are also required to spend money for the poor, one of them should handle these funds and the other, the money for the maintenance of the sisters.

If, as is the custom in the parishes of Paris, you were to receive an annual sum, it would not be necessary to give an account of your expenditures to the Count. However, since he sets no limits and money is requested as needed, you must furnish him with separate accounts of expenditures both for yourselves and for the poor.

As for your food, you may not change it even if you are offered better than that which you receive where you are housed.

Our sisters shall remember to be as recollected as possible in all places, visiting no one and allowing no one to enter their quarters, whether to visit or to engage in useless conversation.

When they are requested to do something the propriety of which they doubt, they shall defer the matter as long as they can in order to have the time to seek the advice of the Superioress.

Our dear Sisters are most humbly requested, at the beginning, to send us news every two weeks, and to pray for us and for the entire Company. On our part, we shall often implore God to grant them the blessings they need for the fulfillment of His will. May He be eternally blessed.

A.14B - (TO THE VIRGIN MARY)

Most Holy Virgin, you know the emotions of my heart today at the thought of your Divine Son in the Crib and how great this mystery seemed to me when I considered that it was the introduction of the law of grace granted to all mankind, which until then had been held captive by the guilt of original sin, that deprived all souls of the vision of God for which they had been created.

O holy time of grace! Why are our souls not in a continuous state of joy and happiness? Why does this time not suffice to fill our lives with love for so good a God?

O my God, I wish to reflect often upon this and to recognize Your

infinite mercy because You created me. After this holy time, I beg You to make me most grateful for this favor.

Most Holy Virgin, how admirable is your virtue! You are the Mother of God, yet you did not disdain to live in humility and poverty. You did so to confound our pride and to make us esteem the grace of God above all worldly splendors, which are truly worthless in comparison.

O my God, why am I unable to reveal to the world the beauty which You have shown me as well as the dignity of the Blessed Virgin? Everything is comprised in her title of Mother of the Son of God. How admirable are her deeds! With good reason the Church addresses her as the Mother of Mercy because she is also the Mother of Grace.

I gaze upon you today, most pure Virgin Mother of Grace, since it was you who not only provided the matter for the formation of the sacred body of your Son, at a time when you were not as yet actually a mother, but by bringing Him into the world, you have become both Mother of God and Mother of the Man who at His birth brought a new law to the world, the law which alone leads to eternal life. You are the Mother of the Law of Grace because you are the Mother of Grace incarnate. It seems to me that I have never looked upon you as such. If the people of Israel held Moses in such high esteem because they had received the revelation of the will of God through him, what love and service must I not render to you for having brought the God of the Law of Grace into this world. I shall manifest my gratitude to you by the praise I offer, by my zeal in helping others to recognize your greatness, and by renewed devotion and trust in your powerful intercession with God.

Help me, I implore you, most Holy Virgin, to put such appropriate resolutions into practice.

A.20 - (THOUGHTS ON THE CROSS)

Weeping, Saint Paul exclaimed that many persons living in the world are enemies of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, we are called upon to honor this Holy Cross by all types of suffering, after the example of Our Lord, who teaches us this by His death on the Cross and by all the other pains and sufferings which He endured during His life on earth and which are recounted in several places in the Gospel. But souls chosen by God are very particularly destined to suffer, and this is such a sweet and agreeable privilege for them that they would rather die than not suffer since they consider loving and suffering as one and the same thing.

Our Lord wanted us to understand the dignity of suffering when He told Saint Paul that he would be honored by the privilege of suffering in

His name. This belief is a truth which must be deeply rooted in our hearts. Effectively, what are we accomplishing on earth when we suffer? We are applying to ourselves the merit of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

And what is God doing in heaven? He is eternally fulfilling the purpose for which His Son suffered and died, by granting eternal happiness to souls redeemed by this Divine Savior.

O Holy Cross! O suffering! How amiable you are since you are honored and will be eternally honored because of the power which you have given souls to praise and love God!

O Holy Cross! O suffering! How amiable you are since the love of God has given way to you in His Son to gain through you the power to give paradise to those who had lost it by pleasure!

A.36 - (THOUGHTS ON THE FEAST OF SAINT FIACRE)

Saint Fiacre left his country and the house of his father, the King, in order to live in the desert of Brie. This generous action could have been prompted only by a strong interior grace which, at one and the same time, enlightened his understanding and revealed to him the greatness of God and the contempt that he should have for all the splendors of the earth.

Grace thus touched his will and penetrated the depths of his heart, removing from his soul any obstacle to the dispositions which God in His goodness was giving to him. In order to make him a perfect man, God so filled him with His divine love that he left everything so as to possess the plenitude of this love.

At the sight of this divine action, I prayed that God would act in a similar manner in my soul and remove from it any obstacle to the grace which His goodness willed to bestow upon it and fill it with the necessary dispositions. I then resolved to cooperate and to strive to rid myself of the evil inclinations that often lead to sin, which is nothingness opposing itself to the omnipotence of God. I shall make every effort to avoid idleness, which is of such great importance because it imprisons the soul in a state of vicious poverty, since every instant that the soul cooperates with God it can amass immense treasures.

Not only did Saint Fiacre leave his country, but he did so in order to avoid becoming its King. When the emissaries of his father's kingdom were pursuing him, he begged God to cover him with leprosy so that they would leave him in peace in his hermitage.

As I reflected on the life and plans of Saint Fiacre, I saw that by renouncing his kingdom he took over the rule of a much more important

one because it is said that each human being is a microcosm of the universe.

Therefore, I looked upon him as the peaceful possessor of his little republic, overcoming, or rather, having overcome, his passions by the repudiation of all worldly pretensions. At the moment of death, friends and pleasures forsake those who have pursued them, but the subjects of our spiritual King will never abandon Him because they have been transformed from worldly, temporal and sensual beings into celestial and spiritual ones.

What a happiness it is to contemplate such a soul ascending to Paradise! There the King of Kings will welcome triumphantly this Prince and his court and make him one of His principal courtiers. I hope to imitate him by willingly renouncing everything and especially by placing no value on any position of authority and by trying to be relieved of office prior to my death, or, rather, during my lifetime. Neither shall I be concerned about who will replace me when business calls me away since I must believe that God is to be the absolute Master in the direction of souls.

I did not feel up to traveling. However, I asked God for good health because I had been advised to do so but, desiring to imitate the sentiments with which Saint Fiacre prayed for leprosy, I implored God not to cure me if I was not going to make a similar use of my restored health. I prayed also to be rid of all useless suspicions concerning my neighbor.

Our meditation on pilgrimages caused me to reflect that, in creating souls, God placed them here on earth as pilgrims destined to be in the company of their bodies only for a time. I considered that the greater number of our forefathers did not possess a permanent home and often undertook pilgrimages of devotion, perhaps to place before their eyes the fact that this earth was not their true home. In order to convince them of this truth, it often pleased God to have them accompanied by angels. In imitation of their example, I should willingly accept any change of place that Divine Providence may allow, being accompanied interiorly by my guardian angel.

I also thought that our first father, Adam, wanted to perpetuate his life on earth, in opposition to the plans of God, by eating the forbidden fruit and that, instead of acquiring life, he met with death. So as to remedy this evil, the Son of God came in person as a pilgrim, His life being one unending pilgrimage. This should be the example for our lives. Therefore, I have resolved to meditate profoundly on His life and to try to imitate it. I spent a great deal of time reflecting on the title of Christian which we bear, and I came to the conclusion that we must, indeed, truly conform our lives to the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to do this, I thought that I should study the manner in which I had acquired this name and the words employed by Holy Mother Church in conferring it upon us.

Finally, I must remember that I received this holy name so as to become a true Christian.

A.42 - (ON THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES IN THE DESERT)

Cum sublevasset oculos

This action of Our Lord as man must reveal the modesty of His exterior demeanor to us. It also permits us to understand that as God His divine gaze is the continual safeguard for the preservation of our natural and immortal being. Likewise, this benign gaze protects the grace which subsists in us by His love and goodness alone. Therefore, I must be eternally grateful to Him for this as well as for His mercy which He shows us in all the actions of His holy life and particularly in the care that His Providence wills to have for the flocks which follow Him. As if He were ignorant of a way to provide for their necessities, He asks where bread can be bought.

O my God, You desire to teach me the means for obtaining Your help in my needs. By the powerlessness which appears in this place, I see that I must admit my lowliness and recognize the truth of my nothingness in order to draw down upon me the greatness of Your mercy.

O Holy Providence, You are the source of all these graces! Grant, I beseech You, that I may confide my soul to You forevermore. It is by the loving gaze of Jesus upon me that I shall obtain this grace. However, this gaze comes from above. Therefore, with the help of His holy grace, I shall detach myself from the earth and attach myself closely to God. By the practice of His Holy Presence, this gentle gaze will inflame me with His holy love.

As the deer seeks water, so my soul seeks God. I shall prepare myself by a great desire to be united to Him so that, as food shares its properties with the human body which consumes it, so the union of my soul with God may render it conformable to Him, and the reception of the Precious Blood of my Savior may lead me to imitate His most holy life.

A.71 - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

(August 18, 1647)¹

The Conference on Holy Communion treats of two points. The first point deals with the reasons why we should give ourselves to God to communicate worthily.

It appeared to me that there are two principal reasons in which all the others are comprised, one is the fear and the other the love of God.

The precept of the Church binding us to go to Communion once a year under pain of mortal sin shows that it is God's absolute will for us to communicate. It would seem from this threat that we should go to Communion frequently under pain of losing many graces which would be given to us in Holy Communion. It also behooves us to give ourselves to communicate worthily because, if we do not do so, we shall be in danger lest the threats addressed both to those who do not go to Communion at all and to those who communicate unworthily be levelled at us in punishment for our sins.

The other reason that we have for giving ourselves to God to communicate worthily is the gratitude we should have for the great love which He reveals by giving Himself to us in Holy Communion. We can only do so by testifying a reciprocal love of Our Lord, by desiring with all our heart to receive Him since He wishes with all His heart to give Himself to us. His love appeared to me to be all the greater from the fact that, His Incarnation having sufficed for our Redemption, it would seem as if He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion solely for our sanctification, not merely by the application of the merits of His Incarnation and death, but also by the communication which His goodness desires to make to us of all the actions of His life, and to establish us in the practice of His virtues, desiring to make us like unto Himself by His love.

On the second point which deals with what we should do in order to give ourselves to God to communicate worthily, it seemed to me that we should have a high esteem of Holy Communion, that such an esteem inspires a fear in us of not having the dispositions for communicating worthily and that, as one of the effects of Holy Communion, and the principal one, is union with God, we should strive, as far as it is in our power, to remove all hindrances to this union. And as the most dangerous of all is to be too self-centered and self-willed, through love of our own will, it is essential for us to give ourselves to God to have only one will with Him if we are to participate in the fruits of Holy Communion. This is what I desired after I had been taught by God, on so many occasions,

1. Thoughts drawn up by Louise de Marillac for the Conference (Coste IX, 341).

that I am incapable of any manner of good and utterly unworthy of Holy Communion.

It seemed to me that I should regard more attentively the actions of the Son of God in order that, aided by His grace, I may unite mine to His.

Because I know that God sees all things, I think I should always have a right intention when I go to Communion, without any admixture of human respect, and go solely for the love I should bear the holy and divine humanity of Jesus Christ, so that I may faithfully correspond to the love He bears me in this most Holy Sacrament. The knowledge God has imparted to me of the many occasions when, in the course of my life, I abused Holy Communion, by leading a life which rendered me unworthy of It and by the violence of my passions, inspired me with a desire to mortify them, so that I may not incur God's hatred instead of His love, if I continue to make a bad use of this divine Food.

A.63 - (REASONS FOR PERSEVERING IN ONE'S VOCATION)¹

Three reasons why the Daughters of Charity must have the firm resolution to remain in the Company all their lives:

The first is the esteem we must have for the grace of our vocation.

The second is the danger to be found in uncertainty which causes us to think constantly of the future and which prevents us from making good use of the present.

The third is the occasions which the Daughters of Charity will constantly encounter for losing their vocation.

Means for making and keeping this resolution

The first is to ask God earnestly for the grace to do so.

The second is to reflect often on this vocation both as coming from God and as received by us, always recognizing our unworthiness.

The third is never to allow any thought which might lead us to abandon it.

1. Louise de Marillac used to prepare her thoughts in writing on the subject of the Conference being given by Vincent de Paul. At the beginning of the Company, it was she who drew up the account of the Conferences from Vincent de Paul's notes, from the sisters' letters, and from whatever the sisters remembered. In May 1646, she confided this duty to her secretary, Sister Élisabeth Hellot, who will be replaced in 1652 by Julienne Loret, and then by Mathurine Guérin. The secretaries saved many of the letters of their Foundress.

Signs by which we may know those sisters who have taken such a resolution

The first is to be exact in the observance of her Rules.

The second is to encourage the other sisters and to have a great desire for the perfection of all.

The third is to show great cordiality and to give proof of strong and respectful friendship.

A.68 - (ON OBEDIENCE)

(August 7, 1650)¹

The first reason that occurred to me is that God, in creating the world, has subjected all creatures to obedience and in such a manner that it seems to me it was only His reasonable creatures who contravened His command and that this obliges us to love and practice obedience.

Another reason is that disobedience has always been so displeasing to God that when disobedience was introduced into the world by man, it was necessary for one of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity to become Man, not only to let us see by His acts of obedience how reasonable it is for us to obey, but also that our imperfect acts of obedience might, by being united to those of the Son of God, acquire the merit of His, and this is a very strong motive for acquiring and practicing the virtue of obedience.

A third reason is that without obedience there would be continual disorder in every family, especially in Communities, and particularly so in that of the Daughters of Charity, both on account of the freedom of going to different places afforded them by their mode of life and by the interior and exterior disorder that would be caused by disobedience.

And as obedience may be observed in different ways, it seemed to me that, if it is to be such as God demands of me, it is essential to obey with great simplicity and humility.

Secondly, we should obey those who have a right to command, without making any distinctions, and as if it were God Himself who commanded since it is for love of Him that we should obey and do His holy will.

A third condition of true and meritorious obedience is not to influence our Superiors to order us to do what we ourselves desire but to desire that we may be ordered to do what they know God demands of us.

In the fourth place, I think that obedience should be cheerful, prompt,

1. Thoughts prepared in view of the Conference (Coste IX, 528).

and uncritical, with submission of our own judgment and a faithful observance of whatever we may have been ordered to do. It will help us very much, in my opinion, if we accustom ourselves not to be self-opinionated and to yield to all sorts of persons, even in trifling matters.

I felt deeply ashamed, for I saw that I have frequently failed in all those observances through my pride and obstinacy, of which I repent and ask pardon of all my sisters who may have remarked it.

One of the means which I thought might help me to acquire this virtue of obedience, such as God demands it of me, is to esteem it highly; frequently to call to mind the obedience of the Son of God in matters that are painful and difficult for us; to reflect that it was His will that obedience should be observed even unto death and that this was to help us as an example and an encouragement.

Another means I hope to make use of is to be on the lookout for opportunities for practicing obedience. If I am not fortunate enough to have them frequently in my daily life, I thought that I should bear in mind, whenever I give orders or suggestions to those to whom I am bound to do so by my office, that it is because I have been commanded to do so by the will of God expressed to me by my Superiors.

A.44B - FORMULA OF THE VOWS¹

I, the undersigned, in the presence of God, renew the promises of my baptism, and I vow poverty, chastity and obedience to the Venerable Superior General of the Priests of the Mission in the Company of the Daughters of Charity in order to give myself, for the whole of this year, to the corporal and spiritual service of the sick poor, our true Masters. I shall do this with the help of God which I ask of Him through His Son Jesus Crucified and the prayers of the Holy Virgin.

A.11 - (NOTES DURING A RETREAT)

I began my retreat with so many occasions to mortify my judgment that I wonder if this has not caused the interior suffering that I am now experiencing. These contradictions led to painful dryness in my customary prayers which lasted a long time, and I was very close to murmuring.

The refusal to send a sister to Madame Manceau, believing that this

1. This vow formula is signed by Jeanne Delacroix who recopied it as far as the word "chastity." The rest is written by Louise de Marillac.

was an honest decision and for her good. The decision to let another sister go to a place near her own home.

Finish the reading.

What a remedy for activity is to be found in recognizing my faults, reflecting on them, and grieving for each of them as well as for the shortcomings of the entire Company.

Am I mistaken when I think that I clearly perceive the interior motives of others, particularly my sisters in the Company?

I wonder if my idiotic behavior in revealing myself and in seeking advice is not putting me in danger of perdition. What prevents me from stopping, so it seems to me, is my inability to find the proper words to express what I really mean.

Did I fail in refusing the women of Saint-Étienne? Am I satisfying some passion on the occasions when I feel a certain repugnance in doing what I believe I must do?

Must I refrain from so much exterior dissipation in the use of elegant phraseology when speaking so as to expedite matters?

Should there be adaptations in my mental and vocal prayers and in my Rule?

Should I continue the prescribed reading in *Grenada* and in the New Testament?

Reflections on the little occasions for amusement that I find in holy cards and other devotions.

The pleasure I find in children. My conduct when there is something in the House belonging to them which is not in customary use. I pay for these things according to their market value rather than their actual worth.

In order to practice obedience, reflect on the Communion of union.

To supplicate very humbly that, for the love of God, I be warned of my faults since this could no longer hurt me. I seek also to be advised of the failings of the Company for the glory of God. I am certain that His goodness will grant me the grace to make good use of these admonitions.

M.20B - (LOVE OF GOD THE CREATOR)

The love which God has for our souls proceeds from the knowledge that He has of the excellence of the being which He has given to them and which participates in His life. This knowledge enables us to recognize their greatness since it is an act outside of God equal to the one which He produced in Himself when He begot the Second Person of the Godhead. However, since our souls are not God Himself and since His knowledge produces the love which He has for them, may He deign to

take fatherly care of the general well-being of those who are completely resigned to the designs of His holy will.

M.40B - (ABANDONMENT TO DIVINE PROVIDENCE)

I must practice great humility and mistrust of myself; abandon myself continuously to the Providence of God; imitate, insofar as I am able, the life of Our Lord who came on earth to accomplish the holy will of God His Father; assist my neighbor to the best of my ability both corporally and spiritually for the love which God has for all of us equally; carry out my spiritual exercises carefully.

A.14 - (THOUGHTS ON THE INCARNATION AND THE HOLY EUCHARIST)

The Son of God took a human body in the womb of the Blessed Virgin in a state of innocence more perfect than that of the first man. This action was sufficient to satisfy divine justice for the disobedience of our first parents and to reveal to us the truth of the plan of God expressed in the words, "My delight is to be with the children of men."

Nevertheless, this did not satisfy His great love for us. He desired an inseparable union of divine nature with human nature. He accomplished this after the Incarnation by the admirable institution of the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar in which the fullness of the divinity dwells continually in the Second Person of the most Blessed Trinity. This union is a means for uniting the Creator to His creature. However, all do not participate in this mystery because free will enables man to bring about his own damnation by following his evil inclinations and the temptations of the devil, or to earn his salvation by grace which applies to him the merits of the Son of God.

We have reason to believe that the assurance which Our Lord gave us that He would always be with us was designed to sanctify souls by means of this continual, albeit invisible, presence and by the application of the merits of His actions to those of His creatures. Our Lord does this either by asking pardon of His Father so as to wash away the sins which we have committed in opposition to the virtues which He Himself practiced, or by rendering the virtuous deeds which men accomplish by the power of His grace pleasing to God by uniting them to His meritorious actions. It seemed to me that it is in this way that the holy humanity of Our Lord is continually present to us. He is among us by the application of His

merits and by the sanctification of souls. His presence is like air without which the soul is lifeless. It is thus that I see the Redemption of men in the Incarnation and their sanctification by means of this union of man with God in the person of His Son and by this continual presence, whereby His merits are applied to each soul joined to the personal union of a God to man. All of nature is thereby honored since it causes God to see His image in all mankind, if it has not been disfigured by the refusal of the application of the merits of His Son which sin alone can effect.

This thought came to me after a long period during which I prayed for a great love for the humanity of Our Lord as a means for moving me to practice His virtues especially gentleness, humility, forbearance and love of my neighbor in order to overcome the sins which I so often commit against them.

M.33 - (DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN)

All truly Christian souls should have great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, especially in her role as Mother of God. They should honor her, also, because of the virtues with which God endowed her for accomplishment of His holy designs.

Her eminent dignity obliges us to honor her in some way each day. The best way to do this is to unite ourselves to the Church, especially at those times which it has set aside for the express purpose of paying homage to Mary. We should rejoice with her and congratulate her for the choice which God made of her by uniting His humanity and His divinity within her womb. We should also implore her to assist us to preserve in our own hearts a close union with God.

When we are filled with gratitude for the graces that God has bestowed upon us through the Incarnation and the exemplary life of Jesus Christ, let us look upon the Blessed Virgin as the channel through which all these benefits have come to us and thank her by acts of love.

Let us take Our Lady as the model for our daily lives and bear in mind that the best way to honor her is by imitating her virtues. We should particularly honor her purity since we are the spouses of Jesus Christ. We should also imitate her humility which led God to do great things in her. Following the example she gave us by living apart from her parents as a very young child, we must be detached from all things. In all of our actions, let us practice these virtues, of which Mary has given us the example, and beg her to offer them to her Son in our name.

Let us celebrate, in a special way, the Church feasts honoring Mary and meditate, during the day, on the mystery proposed. Each day, let us implore her to help us to render to God the service we have promised

Him and to be as submissive as she was in accomplishing His holy will.

We should faithfully recite, each day, those prayers which we have chosen to honor her. These should include acts of love as well as of joyful praise for the glory that is hers in heaven. Finally, let us continue to hope that we will one day be with her and will thus be able to render to her all the honor due to her in the divine plan.

A.23 - (THOUGHTS ON BAPTISM)

Since the sacrament of Baptism is a spiritual birth, it follows that He, in whose name we are baptized, is our Father and that, as His children, we must resemble Him. Consequently, we who are baptized in Jesus Christ are baptized in His death. Thus, our entire life should be a continuous death, for it would be quite prejudicial to the soul to live amidst delights. Moreover, this death in which we are baptized is the result of the love which Our Lord has had for us from all eternity. He could have found no better way to show us that love than by His anticipated death, for if human beings place such a high value on this life that they prefer it to all else, how much greater reason would our dear Master not have had to prize His since He possessed every virtue and had a body in perfect condition? Thus, as the good daughter I desire to be, I want to imitate this good Father. In order to be truly the daughter of death, I resolve, with the help of His grace, no longer to fear that death which will unite us to Jesus Christ for all eternity. It is not logical for the members to flee that which their Head so ardently desired.

Let us live, therefore, as if we were dead in Jesus Christ. Henceforth, let there be no further resistance to Jesus, no action except for Jesus, no thoughts but in Jesus!

May my life be solely for Jesus and my neighbor so that, by means of this unifying love, I may love all that Jesus loves, and through the power of this love which has as its center the eternal love of God for His creatures, I may obtain from His goodness the graces which His mercy wills to bestow upon me.

**A.74 - (THOUGHTS ON THE HIGH ESTEEM WHICH WE SHOULD
HAVE FOR OUR SISTERS)**

(January 5, 1651)¹

The Conference is on the high esteem which we should have for our sisters so as always to speak well of them.

1. On the first point, I thought that one of the reasons which we have for giving ourselves to God to do this is the great difficulty which our love for our own esteem always opposes to the practice of this virtue because of the blindness which it causes us in our own regard and with regard to our neighbor. This often leads us to judge the intentions and actions of our sisters other than what they really are.

2. Another reason is that, if we no longer live for ourselves and are truly given to God to acquire this virtue, His goodness will not permit us to abuse the passions which are part of our nature. Rather, God will grant us the grace to act only as belonging to Him by His spirit, and He will not allow us to dishonor this spirit by acting contrary to it since, being entirely His, we cannot go against it.

The second point deals with the faults which we can commit against this holy practice. One is not to have a high regard for it. Another is not to consider the great good that can come from it. The most serious would be to fail to realize that it is very pleasing to God and not to bother to strive to acquire it.

It follows that, if we do not speak well of our sisters when we are together, we will inevitably say something damaging to them or talk about frivolous things. This could be very prejudicial to the Company and scandalize our neighbor who might hear of it.

Another great evil which is to be feared is that we would live together in discord; that we would not love one another enough; and finally, that God would frequently be offended. If we acquire the practice of esteeming and of speaking well of our sisters, a spirit of union, gentleness and true charity will grow in the Company in keeping with the plan of God when He formed it.

One of the means to attain this virtue is to strive to have a clear understanding of ourselves by awareness of our usual faults.

Another is always to separate the little faults which may appear in our sister from the person committing them. We should always suspend our judgment and excuse her hasty reactions as we would want others to excuse ours. Thereby, we support one another for the love of God.

Another means is to help one another to acquire this habit of speaking well of our sisters. If by chance we should meet a sister who should forget

1. The date is mentioned on the copy made by Marguerite Chétif.

herself so far as to say something unkind about her sister, we should mortify ourselves and refuse to listen. Then we should gently say to her, "My dear Sister, let us remember the admonition which we have received always to speak well of one another."

But the surest means is to humble ourselves; to recognize that of ourselves we can never attain this virtue; and to implore it confidently from God for His glory and love.

A.60 - (OBLIGATIONS OF THE SERVANT OF THE POOR)

The first reason that should cause us to desire to be instructed on the manner in which the Sisters of Charity should act, in all the places where they are employed for the service of the poor, is the danger they are in of doing just the opposite if they do not know how to behave.

The second is the danger that, by acting otherwise, they will go against the will of God.

The third is the danger that God will not derive glory from our employments if we do not act as we should.

1. Great faults can be committed if they are not well informed concerning their responsibilities. It takes great temerity for a sister to act without knowing how she should conduct herself.

2. There is always the danger of offending God when one is uncertain how to behave.

3. This lack of instruction could lead to discord rather than to the union which should exist among them. This is the most damaging thing that could happen to the Company and the most opposed to what God is asking of it.

4. The fourth evil is that a sister who does not know how she should act would be in great danger of becoming a source of disedification to persons of the world. Moreover, she would not serve the poor in the spirit of Jesus Christ, and she could draw down upon herself the indignation of God by her repeated faults. Little by little, she would become lax, thereby rendering herself unworthy of the graces of God. This might even cause His goodness to withdraw from her the grace of her vocation. Such great faults might finally lead to the total destruction of the Company.

It seems to me that the first means to help us to act as true Daughters of Charity is always to be disposed to respond to holy obedience with the view of accomplishing the will of God.

To be available to go anywhere; to be disposed to be submissive to the sister who will be given to us as Sister Servant; and to do nothing without communicating with her.

Before leaving for a new mission, to take the firm resolution to do

nothing contrary to the rules and maxims of the Motherhouse or of the Company.

To be faithful neither to give nor to receive news, except when told to do so by the Sister Servant who shall not fail to send it to the Superiors in Paris.

To be very respectful to the Ladies of Charity and to others employed in the service of the poor.

Neither to meddle nor to speak with them without the advice of the Sister Servant.

To be very circumspect in speaking with externs, especially concerning private community matters.

To be supportive, cordial and submissive to one another. To preserve the spirit of gentleness and charity.

This could be done easily if the sisters are as faithful as they should be to the practice of their Rule which should be repeated frequently so that they can learn it by heart. It should be read in places where this can be done.

In order to accomplish these things, they must have great mistrust of themselves and great confidence in God.

A practice to be remembered is the thought that if Jesus Christ had not been...

A.56 - NOTES ON THE MEETINGS OF THE LADIES OF CHARITY

It is very evident, in this century, that Divine Providence willed to make use of women to show that it was His goodness alone which desired to aid afflicted peoples and to bring them powerful helps for their salvation.

No one is ignorant of the fact that, to carry this out, God used the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission through the instrumentality of Vincent de Paul. Moreover, everyone is aware that through his work this great benefit spread so far that it is apparent that it must be continued by means of the meetings of the Ladies of Charity where needs will be discussed and where, it seems, the Spirit of God presides.

The power which the Holy Father gave to the aforementioned Congregation of the Mission to establish the Confraternities of Charity is the seed of the fruit which has been produced and which is produced daily not only in France but, we might say, throughout the civilized world.

Was it not by means of this light that the Ladies of the Company of Charity recognized the needs of the provinces and that God gave them the grace to aid these peoples so charitably and so magnificently that Paris has become the admiration of and an example for the entire kingdom?

Were not these holy assemblies at which Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Mission, presided, the means which these charitable Ladies employed in order to determine priorities for the distribution of goods to the poor?

As we all know, Monsieur Vincent furnished honest and charitable criteria to enable them to discover true needs and to provide for them prudently. In all of this, they sought to meet the spiritual as well as the temporal necessities of the poor, thereby giving honor to God in heaven perhaps even now by His divine foreknowledge of the innumerable souls which will one day be with Him.

We clearly recognize these truths. Therefore, it seems to be essential for the Company of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu to continue its functions, since, from the origin of this noble group, their visits to the sick of this holy hospital have brought such apparent good to the place itself and to the souls who have found the way to salvation there.

Through their ministry, some of the sick poor died a happy death as a result of their good dispositions following a general confession. Others recovered but their confessions led to admirable conversions. The Ladies themselves entered on the pathway to sanctification which is perfect charity, such as that which they have practiced in this place where they have frequently put their lives in danger by their service to the sick. All this has been accomplished by Ladies of noble birth such as princesses and duchesses whom we have seen spending entire hours at the bedside of the sick instructing them in the things necessary for their salvation and helping them to free themselves from the dangers surrounding them.

The truth of what has been reported here would be clearly seen had a record been kept of all of the deeds of the Ladies, known as the Fourteen, who have devoted themselves to these holy exercises in keeping with their rank.

If all the good which seems to have been accomplished here is not only useful but necessary, is it not reasonable to ensure its continuation? If, in the plan of God, there were some powerful guarantee that, once peace has been restored, everyone will live a good Christian life; that God will no longer be offended; and that each individual will have a sufficiency, then the necessity for the continuation of the Company, which can only subsist through its assemblies, would no longer be so urgent to meet needs as they appeared in the past and for which there had been so many assemblies which could also cease.

However, I ask if this general refuge for all countries and nations and this discovery of future needs both in France and elsewhere which are related in these holy meetings do not merit to be continued, although they seem to accomplish so little at the present time. The cloud which somewhat overshadows this light will pass and its rediscovery will lead to the fruits which God desires of His work. To this end, it seems that the Superiors and the other officers, if they seek to continue for the glory

of God, would perform an action worthy of their greatness and agreeable to Eternal Charity by seeking the means for having ready access to the advice and guidance of that person whom God has employed for this purpose for as long a time as His goodness sees fit to leave him on earth. This appears to be a simple matter to the person who humbly asks your pardon for the temerity of this advice and for her audacity in saying that this assembly and the other establishments of the Charity can obtain strength from God to remain faithful and to persevere in the primitive spirit of the Congregation of the Mission. See if the good to be gained from this is small!

A.89B - (INSTRUCTION TO THREE SISTERS WHO WERE BEING SENT TO POLAND)

On September 5, 1652, Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Father, informed our three sisters who had been chosen to go to Poland that they would leave the next morning. However, Divine Providence caused their departure to be postponed until September 7.

The three sisters were: Sister Marguerite Moreau,¹ Sister Madeleine Drugeon² and Sister Françoise Douelle.³ Our Most Honored Father spoke to them in approximately the following words:

"My dear Sisters, I believe that you are aware that the very virtuous princess, the Queen of Poland, has been urging me for more than two years to send her Daughters of Charity who would establish works such as those she had seen in France. Time was necessary to weigh this call to see if it came from God. There can no longer be any doubt about it since this good Lady has persevered in her desire and has put great pressure on me for the past six months to send her Daughters of Charity.

"Oh what a happiness, my dear Daughters, to be certain of this call for the entire Company! And what a happiness for you who have been chosen from among so many others in the Company who might do better than you! You should have no doubt of this.

"But, my Daughters, why is this call such a cause for happiness? Here are a few reasons.

"The first is that it is God who is calling you. Oh, what a great vocation it is to be called by God! This is apparent from the complaint which we hear from God concerning persons who want to work in His service when He has not called them. Moreover, does Our Lord not reveal the greatness

1. Marguerite Moreau, see Letter 278.

2. Madeleine Drugeon, see Letter 416.

3. Françoise Douelle, see Letter 364.

of a vocation to follow Him when He says to His Apostles, 'You have not chosen me but I have chosen you?' Therefore, you should greatly esteem your vocation. Humble yourselves for this grace, my dear Sisters, and be grateful for it. Humble yourselves at the sight of this astonishing action of God for what would you be, my Daughters, had He not chosen to call you from your poor and lowly state to serve Him? Had you remained in the way of life for which you were destined by your birth, you would be performing the manual labor of poor people just as other village girls do. Who would have shown you any more respect than they show to others of your background? This is why you and I have great reason to humble ourselves. However, our humility should be solid and lead us always to look upon others as better than ourselves."¹

S.1 - (VISITATION OF A HOUSE)²

The Conferences to our sisters are ordinarily on points of our Rules.

Advice is given on ways to observe them well; on the virtues of which the Company stands in need or in which it has failed; and also on the manner in which the sisters should deal with their confessors or other responsible persons.

The points to be treated in the Conference are given to the sisters a short time in advance so that they may make their meditation on them.

1. The Sister Servant is a compulsive worker. She even chides others if they show repugnance or unwillingness to comply with her wishes rather than admonishing them or taking the trouble to see to it that her orders are carried out when it is the responsibility of a sister to do so.

She also fails to look after the others and tends to keep to herself because of her melancholy disposition. This could be harmful to the sisters and could even stifle warmth and cordiality had she not been admonished of this fault and helped to overcome it.

2. The Sister Assistant, Sister Claude, is almost the same. She is even a little more melancholy and scrupulous. I believe that no attention should be paid to her scruples and that she should not be allowed to make a general confession. She needs to be pushed to take a little more initiative in aiding the other sisters, either by charitably advising them of their faults or of how they should act or by helping them in their difficulties. She sometimes uses her tenderness for her mother as a pretext for her behavior. However, her mother has no need of her assistance. She also likes to come to Paris.

1. Text copied by Louise de Marillac that is not included in Coste.

2. Probably the house at Saint-Denis, where Sister Claude Brigide was assigned in 1652.

3. Sister Catherine easily listens to externs and even to the complaints of the sisters when they have little occasions for murmuring or dissatisfaction. She is naturally inclined to be a bit affected and self-indulgent and to have a good opinion of herself. You have to approach her to know her needs. Nevertheless, she is a good soul who mends her ways quickly when she is admonished. She is anything but scrupulous. Rather, she needs to be helped to be more concerned about her faults, particularly those against the Rules.

4. Sister Brigide has an open, simple disposition. She is quite willing to be admonished of her faults. She easily becomes annoyed and shows it, but she calms down quickly after her first reaction which is sometimes too violent.

5. Sister Marguerite is somewhat attached to her own opinion and to what she wants to do. She likes to converse with and listen to externs.

6. Sister Antoinette is a bit haughty and not very exact in obedience because of carelessness. By the grace of God, all her faults are natural reactions and not deliberate.

A.78 - (ON THE NAMING OF SISTER SERVANTS)

The first reason is that if we rely on ourselves the choice we make will be suspect, and we will inevitably be inclined to follow our own whims.

Another reason is that if we are truly given to God, we will seek only His interests, and thus we may hope that we will decide everything according to His good pleasure.

We must pay attention to the information we have on the subject and see to it that the sisters we would like to name have a great love for their vocation and for the practice of the Rule, and that they give evidence of wanting to acquire or of having already acquired the spirit of the Company which consists of humility, simplicity and charity.

Another sign we should look for in them is willingness to be the first to do what they are supposed to teach others, and submission to Superiors which is as great or greater than that of the other sisters.

Total openness is the means which those of us who are called upon to make these decisions should employ if we wish to do it well.

**A.99 - (NOTES ON THE ORGANIZATION OF THE HOSPICE OF THE
SAINT-NOM-DE-JÉSUS)**

(c. 1653)¹

Wishing to contemplate the work before God, the thought came to me to look at it in all its stages; namely, its beginning, its continuation and its completion. We must not think of this as the plan of men, but as a plan inspired by God to be carried out by His servants.

Looking at it in its completion, I perceived it as excellent since it concerns the glory of God in the accomplishment of His most holy will which ordered man to earn his bread by working.

Another end is that persons sheltered there will be helped to become participants in the merits of the life and death of Jesus Christ and thereby to gain eternal salvation as much by the instruction they receive as by the good use they make of their time.

Now, since this is a great undertaking, it is important to lay good foundations so as to build it as perfectly as possible and to make it last.

It seemed to me that we should hope that the first persons chosen would be of great integrity and that they should not necessarily be beggars. For this reason, it would be appropriate, after the selection has been made, to help them to understand the importance of the decision which they have made. There may be persons who are relatively well off who would wish to pass for poor people. If, as I believe Divine Providence will permit from time to time, they are skilled in a trade, they shall be allowed to stay only for six months and in order to teach their craft to others.

So as to avoid complications at the beginning, it seems necessary to accept no married men or women, even if they are childless, since this would be a most difficult situation to encounter. Nevertheless, if some such persons wish to be admitted for a period of time and if they are resolved to cut themselves off from their families, it may be possible, after careful reflection and if God so wills it, to find a few who would help to give a good foundation to this work.

The difficulty in accepting such persons arises from the possible necessity of providing them with a bit of wine or beer.

Since one of the greatest assets of this project is the work which it provides, it is necessary to assign tasks which are useful and productive. An acceptable one would be that of clothmaker. Apart from being productive—the cloth could be used in the House and in other places—it employs many persons and requires little equipment. Bootmakers and shoemakers would also be most useful. Any buttonmakers and muslin

1. See Letter 76b.

workers who are skilled in their trade can put the finishing touches on the products before they are put into use.

Other useful workers are: lacemakers, glovemakers who know how to trim, seamstresses who can take in work from the dressmakers of the city and of other places, and pinmakers.

Having quite enough workers to get the project underway and to keep it going, there is no need to consider the expense that will be incurred for tools and building supplies, nor is there need to be concerned about the difficulty of the skills involved or the problem of securing a location cheaply and easily. Divine Providence provides for all, and skills will be discovered through experience.

Rest assured that there will be very little progress during the first year.

A.79 - (MEMORANDUM CONCERNING THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF CHANTILLY)

(1654)

The Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor of Chantilly, were obliged to live on borrowed money throughout the year 1653 since, for that entire year they received, in grain and cash, only 77 of the 200 pounds due to them. Therefore, they must be paid the sum of 123 pounds to settle this account.

As of October 24, they have received 61 pounds, 12 sous of the approximately 171 pounds which should have been paid to them by this date for the year 1654. Therefore, 109 pounds, 8 sous are still owed to them. Since the month of October, they have received full payment both in grain and in cash.

Moreover, the rent for their housing has not been paid for four years and it falls due once again on the Feast of Saint Martin. The sum involved is 36 pounds per year. To satisfy this debt their furniture has been repossessed and is about to be sold.

**A.62 - (MOTIVES WHICH THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY HAVE
FOR GIVING THEMSELVES TO GOD TO OBTAIN THE
PRESERVATION OF THE COMPANY)**

(May 25, 1654)¹

The first reason we have for giving ourselves to God to obtain from His goodness the preservation of the Company for many a long year and, if possible, forever, is to be persuaded, as we are bound to be, that God Himself willed its establishment and willed it in the form in which it now actually exists. And God does not wish His creatures to destroy what He has made.

Another reason is that those who would go against the designs of God by contributing to the ruin of the Company would be the cause of the loss of many souls and would prevent many poor persons from being helped. Such infidelity would put their eternal salvation in danger.

Another thing which would contribute to the ruin of the Company would be, first of all, a desire to alter its customs, because this would, in a way, be to prefer one's own judgment to the guidance of God who knows well enough its future needs.

A second thing which could lead to the ruin of the Company would be to have, on account of our cowardice, little love and esteem for the exercises prescribed in our little Rules.

Another thing which could cause the complete destruction of the Company would be for the sisters to forget what they are, and on account of their long collaboration with the Ladies, which gives them the opportunity to handle the money donated for the poor and to live comfortably without worrying about earning their livelihood, to become complacent. This could lead to vain satisfaction and the desire to accumulate goods. Forgetting the obligations of their vocation, they could want to become independent in some places. What would be even worse would be the thought of setting aside some funds so as to carry out this miserable design. Should this contagion touch several members of the Company, there would be reason to fear that the goodness of God would be offended and that the total ruin of the Company would ensue.

The means to prevent the destruction of the Company are to reflect frequently on the grace which God has given to us by calling us to it and to ask Him for the grace to persevere in it.

The final means is to strive to acquire the spirit of the Company through the love which we must have for Our Lord and by the practice of humility, simplicity and true charity.

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste IX, 693). Louise de Marillac had read only the first part when Vincent de Paul stopped her to give an explanation.

A.67 - (ON MORTIFICATION)

(January 3, 1655)¹

I think that one of the reasons which we have for practicing mortification is the necessity of keeping our souls constantly in the state in which they were created. Since they were made in the image and likeness of God, they are disfigured, to a certain extent, when we do not mortify our passions but rather allow them to overwhelm us.

Another reason is that mortification is the life of the soul, just as the soul is the life of the body. If we do not mortify ourselves, our souls will die in the pursuit of passion and will be forever displeasing to God.

We must look to the example of Our Lord, although the passions and sins to be found in us were never in Him.

A third reason is that, if we do not practice this virtue, we will never be able to support one another as we must. Moreover, we will become a source of scandal for the world if we allow ourselves to yield to our first emotions.

On the second point, it seems to me that we must practice this virtue particularly by the frequent mortification of our own judgment and openness to the opinions of others.

We must also mortify our self-will and more willingly condescend to our sisters when there is no prejudice possible to the glory of God.

We cannot place limits on the time which must be devoted to the acquisition of perfect mortification. On the contrary, we must undertake this labor generously for our entire lives since it is a matter of mortifying rather than of killing our passions. These passions remain constantly alive within us. Therefore, we must be continuously vigilant and work to mortify them. In order to do this, it would be well for each of us to take the trouble to ask occasionally for some exterior acts of mortification. Nevertheless, this should be done after we have worked to mortify our interior and anything that we may see in ourselves that is contrary to the little Rules of the Company.

Strict mortification of our curiosity is necessary, especially when the sisters are together. Ordinarily, we are anxious to discover the failings and moods of our sisters and also to relate whatever we have heard. We are even obliged to be careful to mortify the feelings of vindictiveness which can cause trouble among the sisters of the parishes when we allow ourselves to complain of our little occasions of annoyance with one another.

If the Daughters of Charity are to persevere in their vocation and obtain from God the graces of which they stand in need, I believe also

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste X, 63).

that, in general, they must strive continuously to mortify their senses and passions by never allowing them to push them to accomplish the evils which they propose. To this end, they must strive to gain insight into this matter.

I acknowledge my guilt before God for my negligence in assisting our sisters in this task and for my failure to give them the necessary example because of my cowardice, my tenderness for myself and my sensuality.

A.65 - SECRETIVENESS

(February 2, 1655)¹

The interpretation of the spirit of secretiveness has furnished us with more than one motive for putting us on our guard, for it has made us see that it is a demon hidden in the soul which may do us far more harm than the diabolical possession of the body, for one is concerned with eternal life and the other with temporal life only. Another reason is that if we act by this spirit of secretiveness we extinguish, in a manner, the light which Our Lord came to enkindle in our souls. Another reason is that persons who are moved by this spirit are most annoying and troublesome to those with whom they live, and they run a great danger of the spirit of pride gaining an ascendancy over their imagination so that, because from this motive they have desired to hide themselves from others, although unconsciously, they are so hidden from themselves that they cannot make themselves known; and they are thus prevented from receiving the advice and warnings of which they stand in need.

Part 2

Although there are other types of character who, by natural disposition, find it impossible either to speak out or to explain, nevertheless, I think that passions afford much food for this temptation and especially the passion of pride, which suggests to us not to mention this thing or that lest conclusions be drawn from it, or lest people believe that, because we fell into a fault once, we may be always suspected of it. This does great damage to the soul and inclines it to take the liberty to commit a great many other faults.

Persons who have this fault of not opening up their minds freely to their Superiors, when suffering from any mental troubles or when in need, or when they make their spiritual communications, are in danger of telling

1. Thoughts prepared for the Conference (Coste X, 75).

lies or of practicing much dissimulation. And this habit may be so strongly formed that they may even yield to it in confession. This spirit of secretiveness, proceeding from the evil spirit, may cause such embarrassment to those who possess it as possibly to lead them to despise the warnings of their Superiors and to pay no regard to the duty of mentioning their difficulties, because they believe their Superiors are interested parties or have been influenced by others. This causes them to seek help or consolation where they should not, and to discover sources of help or consolation that are most dangerous and lead to their destruction. Those who gradually come to accept the maxim of the spirit of secretiveness, being unable to keep their own troubles or what they know of those of others to themselves, are in danger of communicating their thoughts and feelings unsuitably and to all sorts of persons, which is most prejudicial to their spiritual progress; it leads them to offend God and causes those who listen to them to commit the same faults.

Part 3

As this spirit is most dangerous and frequently unknown to us, we should often ask Our Lord for light to detect it and, if it is in us, each one of us should fear and distrust herself, lest she should have a share of it. In order to get rid of this spirit, it is necessary, as soon as one feels any difficulty and repugnance in admitting the fact, to have recourse to the Holy Spirit, to ask Him for strength, and overcoming oneself, to admit this reluctance for the love of God. Moreover, if any feel inclined to seek consolation in others, by pouring out their mind to them, they should distrust themselves and, furthermore, if they feel any repugnance at the fact that their Superiors may know what they would like to say or even think, they should fear this repugnance.

S.4 - (COUNCIL)

(October 5, 1655)

The first three Officers began their meeting by determining to treat of three subjects. The first was that they were to be informed as soon as our three sisters,¹ Henriette, Marie-Marthe and Renee, arrived on foot from Nantes. They were also to discuss the manner in which these sisters were to be received.

The second was to determine who should be sent to Châteaudun to

1. Henriette Gesseume, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, and Renée Delacroix.

replace Sister Geneviève who would be returning soon. The third was to study together the conduct of the sisters so as to be aware of their failings and of the needs and the overall condition of the sisters of the Motherhouse.

It was resolved that we should welcome our dear sisters with cheerful countenances, manifesting our joy at seeing them without mentioning in any way what had occurred at Nantes either when they arrived or at any later date. We determined also to find out as soon as we had greeted them if they needed to eat or if they wished to retire. Had they, in fact, arrived on foot, they were to be given water, in which fine herbs had been boiled, to soak their legs.

Sister Jeanne from Senlis¹ was suggested for Châteaudun and we decided to send her.

Time ran out so we did not discuss anything more.

A.13B - (ON THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION)

As soon as our first parent had sinned, the goodness of God took pity on human nature and promised to repair the fault by the Incarnation of His Word. This promise was so powerful that, although it did not completely abolish sin because of the freedom which God has given to man, it changed its effect, making it personal.

This promise meant that the whole nature could no longer participate in the fault of an individual because the Person of God was now part of it. Moreover, its effect was immediate for us since, from the instant it was made, the divine plan was accomplished in the mind of God.

O admirable love! O hidden secret! What did You want to do, O my God, when You created man since You were not unaware of his weakness? However, the events had to be as they were, O my Master, to make us understand the effects of Your great love.

Was it not also, O my God, so that Your admirable Incarnation might be the source of the graces of which souls stand in need in order to reach their end? When You created our bodies, You gave us all that we need to feed and clothe ourselves and to experience pleasure. However, the soul, by its nature, could never of itself make use of all these means for its preservation. Neither could it become so closely united to God who is its object since He is inaccessible to all beings except through this most admirable of means which makes God man and man God who, continually present to the soul . . . has made it so like unto Himself that He acts

1. Jeanne Gressier.

it as He sees fit, conformably to its needs, in order to enable it to attain its end in keeping with His designs for each individual.

Yes, O my God, I wholeheartedly accept this thought which seems to me to be so in keeping with Your goodness and love. To fail to acknowledge the fact that You want to communicate interiorly with man would be, as it were, to diminish and to be ungrateful for the love which You bring to us.

What! You, who would will the communion of the Saints of the Church Triumphant, Suffering and Militant, and who operate all these marvels, would act like the princes of this earth who must remain withdrawn from others in order to maintain their authority! Oh, it is not so. You who are infinite goodness always want to communicate Yourself. Therefore, I shall be more attentive than ever to Your dear presence. Do not, I beg of You, O my Lord, reject the most unfaithful of Your creatures. I hope for this through Your love. I implore You to share the sentiments which You put into my heart during this little meditation with those who need them so that, by loving and honoring Your holy and amiable presence, they may apply themselves to be attentive to it. Thus, You will not refuse to grant them the graces that You infallibly give to those who hold themselves in the disposition to receive them anymore than the sun distinguishes in shedding its rays on all that is before it.

Now is the time for the fulfillment of your promise. Blessed may You be forever, O my God, for the choice which You made of the Holy Virgin! Did not the devil merit final damnation from Your divinity? It was necessary for Your omnipotence to make use of the weaker sex in human nature to crush his head as Your justice had threatened to do. In order to accomplish this, You used the blood of the Blessed Virgin to form the body of Your dear Son. O admirable goodness! What care You took in carrying out your plan! How long did You defer it?...

A.24 - (THE SOVEREIGN DOMINION OF GOD)

In the one true being of God resides the essence of all the other beings which, in His goodness, He has created. Since all time is dependent upon His eternity, it is only reasonable that we should employ it according to His holy will and for His glory. Everything has been created by Him in the most perfect order; therefore, I shall strive more than I have in the past to live as well-regulated a life as possible. I shall begin this month by honoring the sacred order of creation as it was accomplished by the true and only divinity.

A.25 - (THE PURITY OF LOVE NECESSARY TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT)

Souls that are truly poor and desirous of serving God should place their trust in the coming of the Holy Spirit within them believing that, finding no resistance in them, He will give them the disposition necessary to accomplish the holy will of God which should be their only preoccupation.

In order to be in a state of receptivity, the soul must imitate the obedience of the Apostles by freely confessing its powerlessness and by detaching itself completely from all creatures and even from God Himself, insofar as the senses are concerned, because the Son of God, who prepared His Apostles to receive the Holy Spirit, did so by depriving them of His divine presence at His Ascension. The Holy Spirit, upon entering souls that are so disposed, will certainly remove any obstacle to His divine operations by the ardor of His love. He will establish the laws of holy charity by endowing them with the strength to accomplish tasks beyond their human powers so long as they remain in a state of total detachment.

The love which we are obliged to bring to God must be so pure that, when we receive His most particular graces, we must hope for nothing other than the glory of His Son. Our Lord taught us this in the person of His Apostles to whom He had promised to send His Holy Spirit when He assured them that He would thereby be glorified.

The soul that truly loves God must seek nothing more. The greatest happiness that it can experience is to cooperate in rendering glory to Him whose ignominious death astounded all mankind. Even if, as God, He did not merit the purity of love which would make Him the unique object of all our affections, we would be obliged to render to His holy humanity a debt of gratitude for the greatness of His love.

Blessed, therefore, are they who help others to fulfill their obligations to Him. Blessed are they whose powerlessness prevents them from acting in any other way and who employ the full power of their love so as to make the love of their Master the sole proprietor of their hearts.

A.28 - (THOUGHTS ON THE EXCELLENCE OF OUR SOULS)

The love which God has for our souls proceeds from the knowledge that He has of the excellence of the being which He has given to them and which participates in His life. This knowledge enables us to recognize their greatness since it is an act outside of God equal in some ways to the one which He produced in Himself when He begot the Second Person of the Godhead. However, since our souls are not God Himself, and since

His knowledge produces the love which He has for them, may He deign to take fatherly care of the general well-being of those who are completely resigned to the designs of His holy will.

A.37 - (HEAVEN COMPARED TO A MUSTARD SEED)

Our Lord wanted to make the Kingdom of Heaven accessible to us by comparing it to a mustard seed and thus teaching us how easy it is to gain this kingdom which He has won for us by so much labor and suffering and by His death. We are assured that we shall attain this bliss if we desire it. It would appear that this kingdom is but a desire in this world, for what is smaller than a mustard seed, and what is more insignificant than a desire?

What! O my God, is this bliss, which is the sole satisfaction of the blessed, such a small thing? Do You thus minimize the blood and the life that purchased it? Do You esteem it so little as to compare it to a tiny mustard seed? Nevertheless, I am well aware that this seed contains great strength within itself, both in its capacity to multiply and in the quality it gives to everything that is seasoned with it.

Therefore, I shall strive for the desire for heaven and, once I possess this desire, I shall sow it in the soil of my heart. Then I shall ask my God to enrich this ground with the warmth of His love and to water it with the Precious Blood of my Savior so that this seed may grow to its full perfection.

M.69 - (ON RECREATION)

Recreation must always begin with a reminder of the presence of God and of the equality of all reasonable beings in His eyes, reflecting that the least esteemed by men are perhaps the best loved by God.

Recreation should be regarded as a time allowed by the goodness of God to unite ourselves by means of a sincere communication of thoughts, words and actions. This time should be used to honor the true union of the three distinct Persons of the Blessed Trinity and the admirable union of the blessed in heaven.

During recreation, conversation should be truly lighthearted and cordial. We should converse with those who are agreeable to us as well as with those we favor less, replying graciously without arguing and without taking offense at what is said, bearing in mind the meekness with which Jesus Christ received the blame for His holy words and actions.

Never make fun of a sister who does not speak well unless you are certain that she does not mind it and that your heart is free from uncharitable feelings. Should you be the target of others' amusement, accept the situation graciously and consider your sisters as better than yourself and, therefore, as better loved by God. Look upon yourself as blessed in the occasion offered you of serving them.

From time to time during recreation, raise your mind to God and recall that you are strengthening your mind and body in their weakness during this period of rest. Because of this, they can be better employed in the service of God, according to your obligations, and they are once again given courage for the work at hand.

During this time of recreation, reflect on the eternal joy that you will have in heaven if, on earth, you love God and your neighbor as He has commanded you. To help you practice the love you owe your neighbor, remember when you are together that the bond of union among you is the Blood shed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.

Conversation during the time allowed must be in a spirit of great charity, following the example set for us by the Son of God while on earth. You must try to associate with those sisters who bring you the closest to virtue, or with those whom you can help in the same way. Keep yourself interested in others. Do not get angry over the actions of the others, especially over their intentions. Avoid exclusive friendships since you are obliged to a mutual communication with one another in order to maintain the union which must be preserved in your religious family.

Be amiable with all your sisters. Always respect your Superior whom you must look upon as Jesus Christ on earth. Never criticize her manner of governing even when her orders sometimes appear to be contrary to your views or perhaps far from reasonable. Certainly, with a little patience, you will discover that it is the spirit of God more than the spirit of the Superior that is governing.

Be zealous in defending the sisters who are absent. Let your charity be such that you do not easily give in to rash judgments. Always put yourself in the place of those who are blamed either by reflecting on your own faults or by taking into consideration the power of natural inclinations on a person's way of thinking and the near impossibility of getting rid of a habit. Finally, remind yourself and those with you of your mutual obligations to God if you are all exempt from the fault in question. However, be careful that what you say about others proceeds from a truly Christian heart and not from pretended virtue.

Your conversation should center mainly on subjects which help you to fulfill the obligations of your Rules. You should bear in mind that all other acts are more prejudicial than helpful to you.

A.92 - (ON THE DUTIES OF THE MOTHERHOUSE)

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The sisters entrusted with the duties of the House shall consider themselves doubly obliged to give good example to all the Company, and they shall serve the Company in the same spirit of gentleness and charity that they would bring to the service of the poor if they were so employed, recognizing Our Lord in these persons.

The Bell-Ringer

The sister who rings the bell shall have a special devotion to her guardian angel so that he will help her to wake up a short time before four o'clock. She must consider that God will hold her responsible for those who, through her fault, would fail to rise. Likewise, however, with the thought of God's approval, she shall consider that she will share in the merits of the prayers which God will give to those who, with her help, will awaken on time.

After waking up, she shall get dressed quietly and shall make her rounds modestly. In order not to distract or amuse the sisters, she shall only say to them what is necessary to awaken them.

She shall be careful to ring the bell for all the exercises: dinner at eleven-thirty; evening meditation at five-thirty; supper at six o'clock, and prayers at eight o'clock, except on Fridays when she shall ring the bell at seven-thirty.

She must remember not to resemble the bell that she rings. A bell does not go itself to the place to which it calls others. However, since she is the first to summon the other sisters, she must also call herself not only to be the first one in the chapel but also to reflect on where she is going and why.

The Portress

As soon as she is named to her office, the Sister Portress shall give thought to its importance and to the great discretion and reserve that she must exhibit. After having asked God for this grace, she shall implore her guardian angel to assist her; and each time she goes to open the door, she shall try to lift her mind to God.

As far as is possible, she shall not let people ring twice, urging herself to diligence by an act of charity and by the thought that, if God in His

mercy should send her to purgatory and then free her for her entrance into paradise, she would be most annoyed to be kept waiting at the heavenly portals.

She shall have the key to the pantry and the responsibility to cut the breakfast bread which should weigh no more than three-quarters of a pound. She shall not give seconds or more than is necessary to anyone.

It is also necessary that she cut up the bread for the soup and that she cut the slices quite thin so that they soak up the bouillon better. In putting the bread in the soup, she shall be reasonable and shall avoid excess so that there is bouillon for those who need it. The others shall give up some of their bread if there is not enough of it.

In order that there be bread enough for the second table, she shall be careful not to slice it too thickly at the first table. She shall make sure that those in need of more bread are given a little.

She shall collect the soup bowls early, in the event that they must be washed for use at the second table.

She shall take care to remove the serving vessels neatly and shall give what is left over to the Sister Cook. She shall also be sure to prepare the soup for the second table while the other sisters go to the chapel to say the Angelus.

When the sisters have finished dinner, which occurs when the first quarter hour is about to be rung or when the majority of them have finished eating, the Sister Portress shall then be sure to go to ring the bell three times to mark the rising from table, and at the same time, she shall remember to adore the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

I neglected to say that she shall prepare the soup after eleven-fifteen has been rung, and that she shall always prepare first the soup of the poor while honoring Our Lord in each of them.

She shall also be responsible for cleaning, as early as possible, the courtyard and the entrance way, both inside and outside the House, and the stairs leading from the chapel.

The Sister Portress must recollect herself a little each time she opens or shuts the door so that she conducts herself with great modesty and reserve, while at the same time listening seriously and responding to the point.

When news of the sisters is requested, she shall answer only in regard to their health and shall not say where they are placed. If these persons seem most anxious for news, she shall ask them to wait while she goes to obtain the desired information. For this, she shall address herself to the Directress, or in her absence, to the Sister Assistant.

She must never inform a sister that she has visitors until she has obtained permission to do so. If permission is not granted, she must never inform the sister that she has had visitors. Likewise, no messages may be relayed without permission.

The Sister Portress shall not indulge in curiosity when someone comes in and waits, and she shall never ask for news. If someone wishes to give her any, she shall skillfully avoid it. However, if she cannot prevent herself from hearing it, she shall not make it a topic of conversation with the sisters unless it is a matter requiring prayer, in which case she shall notify the Directress or the Sister Assistant.

In the evening, she shall be most careful to close all the doors and windows in the rooms for which she is responsible, and to take the keys to the Sister Assistant.

She shall always take great care to carry the keys with her, never leaving them in the door nor anywhere else, keeping the door doubly locked. When she is requested to do something else, she shall not hand the keys to another sister without the permission of the Sister Assistant or the Directress.

Ordinarily, she shall serve at the first table, and she shall make sure that there is no noise in the refectory. In order to promote this, she shall keep the doors closed and shall not allow in any dogs, cats or chickens. She shall make no noise, opening and closing the doors quietly. She shall be certain that the sisters lack nothing, such as water and bread, dishing out servings reasonably and without showing favoritism. She shall do all of this mindful that she is serving the servants of Our Lord and the poor.

The Cook

The Sister Cook shall go to the kitchen at exactly six o'clock, or a little before, in order to light the fire and place the pot for the sisters' meal over it. She shall think of the joy that St. Martha and St. Joan of Cuşa experienced in preparing food for Our Lord when they were so fortunate as to offer Him their hospitality. Through this thought, she shall move herself to devotion, while considering that she is serving Our Lord in serving His servants in the person of the poor.

She shall do her utmost to prepare the food tastefully so that her effort will compensate for the delicate morsels eaten in other Communities.

She shall be careful to have everything ready for dinner at eleven-thirty, and for supper at exactly six o'clock. For fear that our sisters might be interrupted in their reading—which she herself shall try to hear—the Sister Cook shall make sure that there are no loud voices in the kitchen, nor noises of any kind.

Since the head Sister Cook is also in charge of supplies, she shall be as careful to give the sisters what they need so as to avoid superfluity; charity demanding the former and the virtue of poverty the latter. When she becomes aware that any sister finds the food disagreeable or

distasteful, she shall charitably give her something better and something which she judges in keeping with her infirmities. Likewise, she shall give them a little something along with the breakfast bread, and shall provide collations for those who are truly in need of them.

This sister stands in need of great charity and prudence so that she does not give more to one than to another. She must consider solely her obligations which should incline her to love and to treat all the sisters alike when providing for their needs. If she is aware that a sister, through temperament, feels that she should receive something different from what she is getting, she shall inform the Directress in order to determine whether or not this sister should be satisfied. But whether she gives or refuses, she should always do so gently and with gracious words.

When the sisters are actually ill, it is then that she must redouble her care in making good bouillons. She must remember that it is the exactitude with which she prepares them rather than the quantity of meat used which makes the bouillons pleasing to the patients.

In preparing the soup, she shall be sure always to save some bouillon to give to the sick sisters in the evening.

Although she must do her best in preparing the sisters' food, she should not use spices except when necessary and then only sparingly. Likewise, she should not use onions since they are most unhealthy for the girls.

She shall do her utmost always to eat dinner at the second table with the sisters rather than alone so as to avoid charges of selecting the best meat for herself. Although she is most diligent in carrying out her duties, she is strongly urged not to become saddened or upset by the complaints that a few of the sisters might make about her. Whether these malcontents accuse her of having prepared too much or too little, of having prepared the food badly, or of having prepared better for herself than for the others, she shall make good use of such murmurs. She shall endure them patiently and console herself with the thought of the countless times that murmurs were issued against Our Lord as He was serving His neighbor. He rejoiced at these times and did not feel guilty.

All the sisters are warned against entering any work area or taking anything from these areas without the permission of the Sister Officers. Likewise, however, the Sister Officers must be gracious to those who approach them for permission. If they are obliged to refuse entrance to someone, for example to a sister who wishes to chat or warm herself in bad weather, they shall do so gently while pointing out to her the importance of obedience. However, whenever they are able to allow the sisters entrance, they shall do so, whether it be to take some live embers or to take some utensil—provided that it is returned, since it is inconvenient not to find the needed utensil.

The Infirmarian

As soon as one or several sick sisters are placed in the care of the Sister Infirmarian, she shall look upon it as a request from Our Lord. She shall consider herself as called anew to make the same efforts that He made on earth when He cured the sick poor, and she shall honor His efforts through the work of watching over and caring for the sick.

She shall take great care to inform the Sister Pharmacist of all that happens to the sick and of all that they need; and she shall never give them food or remedies without her advice.

She shall be exact in following the schedule for their food and medicine and she shall not give them anything that could harm them even if they request it.

Although she makes every effort to perform her duty well, nevertheless it is possible that her patients will complain about her. In such a case, she shall not appear upset, but should excuse them on account of their illness and anxiety. She shall strive to satisfy their requests if there is a way of doing so without causing a mishap. Should a sick sister, through impatience, speak rudely to her or express discontent, she shall pretend not to hear her or she shall quietly apologize, thus honoring the rebukes addressed to Our Lord by the Jews when He cured their sick on feast days.

Since the Sisters of Charity are obliged to serve the sick poor both corporally and spiritually, in imitation of Our Lord who, in curing, always gave some advice for the salvation of souls, saying to some, "Go and sin no more," giving others to understand that their faith would save them, and speaking many more words of advice, our Sister Infirmarians shall take great care that the sick have great submission to the will of God and great trust in His love. They shall see to it that the sick sisters make good use of their trials, offering them to God in union with those of His Son. They shall take care that the sisters' hope for salvation be in the life and death of Jesus Crucified, that their intention for the future be to serve God better than ever before, and that they have great compassion for the sick poor who suffer so much without either the corporal or the spiritual help which they are given. From time to time, it would be well to say to them, "My Sister, while lying in your bed, do you ever think of the sufferings of our sick poor; how they are so often all alone without any fire, lying on straw without sheets or blankets, bereft of all kindness and consolation? Do you not consider yourself most blessed with the graces that God has bestowed on you?"

The Sister Infirmarian shall be most exact to notice any change or accident which occurs in the patients so that she can notify the doctor or the Sister Pharmacist. Likewise, when she notices the sick becoming

weaker she shall give notification so that they may be provided with the sacraments.

The Office of the Sister Pharmacist

Since health is the most precious treasure of life, the sister in charge of the pharmacy must be charitable, prudent, and most careful to prepare her compounds in the proper seasons. She shall spare nothing in order to prepare them well, checking on them from time to time to see that none of them have deteriorated, and she shall keep all her pots and bottles well covered.

If God restores their health, they have truly done their best.

A.93 - (REMARKS ON THE COMMON RULES)

(c. 1636)

—Fifth Article—should something be repeated in this article with the words: “in order to merit, as He did, to enter heaven one day?”

—Eighth Article—obscure—it seems to exclude the sisters of the country parishes from sending their surplus funds to the House. This would be unfair since they are clothed at the expense of the House as are the other sisters. In this same article, so long as there shall be a sister at the House who carries the title of Superioress, it has been judged that the first Sister Assistant shall not be called Sister Servant.

—Ninth Article—The ordered sentences are from the Ninth Article, the rest are from the Eighth.

—Tenth Article—The expression “the ungrateful”: is it not too harsh, and does it not seem to presume that the poor owe gratitude to Sisters of Charity? This should not be since the sisters are most obliged to serve the poor.

In following up the statement on the sacraments, it seems to me that if the sick cling to life and desire to receive Communion and have need of confession, that the sisters should provide for them and even incline them to such devotion.

—Eleventh Article—After the last words “their desires,” add “inclining the Ladies or others, to the best of their ability, to do the most good that they can for the poor.”

—Nineteenth Article—Following the statement on the Sister Servant, which position should not exist at the House, add “being in the parishes,”

or else an Article which makes it clear that the Sister Servant must be considered the Superioress by the sisters with her.

—Twenty-first Article—Add, as succinctly as possible, something on the good intentions which they may have.

—Twenty-ninth Article—A statement on the Sister Servant is here again, and it should not say that they shall be granted permission by the Sister Assistant—unless the Superioress is absent. For several reasons the Assistants risk the danger of being given too much authority since we are not like religious communities.

—Thirtieth Article—Does it not seem to stress unduly the possibility that the sisters may dislike one another? Often it is simply a matter of some mood, action, or word.

—Thirty-first Article—Instead of “aversion” say “discontent.”

—Eleventh Article on the employment of the day. The reading of the subject for meditation follows the reading of the *Martyrology* because the sisters fall asleep if it is done after prayers. If some time remains until the quarter hour, a sister shall repeat the subject for meditation so that it is fixed in the mind for the next day.

The repetition of the meditation takes place every day after morning meditation.

To the end of this article add that it would be well to fall asleep having some good thought.

I have made these remarks because your Charity has instructed me to do so. The passage on the Sister Servant can be made more clear by adding: “being in the parishes.”

I have again learned that the Confessor of Chars¹ often forbids talking to the parish priest, and in several meetings also asks what Father has said. It seems odd that they take advantage of one another.

A.81 - (REMARKS ON THE RULE FOR THE SISTERS WITH THE FOUNDLINGS)

Following the Fourth Article

Would it not be appropriate to draw up two or three meditations on the subject of the service of little children? This would point out to the sisters how pleasing this work is to God and the recompense reserved for those who serve the children well. It would also point out the danger of serving them negligently. Such subjects should be meditated on each month.

1. The difficulties are going to increase in 1657, see Letter 535.

After the Sixth Article

In order to promote modesty and purity, as well as good health, the sisters shall not permit the children to get out of bed totally naked, nor to undress totally, nor to go barefoot or bareheaded. Likewise, the sisters shall not comb the children's hair in open areas, such as in the courtyard, nor in their rooms near open windows.

In winter, the sisters shall be on guard that the children do not linger near the fire. Rather, they should be made to play some game in order to warm themselves. From time to time, when necessary, they shall be permitted to warm themselves at the fire.

Also, the sisters shall be watchful year-round that the children do not fall asleep in direct sunlight or in unhealthy places.

After the Twelfth Article

The sisters serving in the rooms of the little children shall try to discipline them with little mortifications or gentle words which encourage them to be good. However, when they remain incorrigible and the sisters feel it necessary to punish them in a different way, they shall notify the Sister Servant who shall take a stick to the children herself, or inform the sisters to do so. In order that this may be done without emotion, the sisters should wait awhile after the children's bad behavior before hitting them, and they shall be very careful to avoid hitting them on the head.

Eighth Article, on the Sister Servant

Following "or otherwise" add "unless they be suited to serve at the House."

Ninth Article

Following the words "and the silence" add "except when their duties require them to do otherwise."

To indicate the time that the litanies of the feast days should begin.

Would it not be necessary also to have particular rules for the duties of the sisters of the Motherhouse such as the Portress, the Bell-Ringer, the Cook and the Clothesroom Sister?

She shall see to it that all the thread and silk is used sparingly, that the children have chores and carry them out; and that whatever is made at the House is sold. Likewise, she shall make sure that the merchants

pay for the goods in order to keep an account of the profit for the Lady Treasurer of the Company for these children; and to cook . . .

Following the Nineteenth Article concerning the children add "that all the children who work, up to age sixteen, shall rise at five o'clock in summer and five-thirty in winter. Ordinarily, they all shall go to bed precisely at nine o'clock."

The sister in charge of the children shall be in their room as they rise from bed. She shall take them to the chapel to pray to God, and upon their return, she shall have them recite their lesson. Then they shall begin work and their breakfast shall be brought to them at eight o'clock.

This sister shall take one or two of these children to Mass every day at the time judged most appropriate by the Sister Servant so long as Mass is not said at the hospital. She shall keep the children in front of her while in the chapel and she shall make sure that they pray attentively. Upon their return, she shall reprimand them for any faults committed while in the chapel.

On the Seventh Article of the Rule

Following these words "as soon as they will be gotten up from bed," add "which shall be, at the earliest, at seven o'clock for the very small children, and at six-thirty for those from six to seven years old."

On the Eighth Article

Instead of the Benedicite being said by the sister, she shall have one of the older girls say it, each one taking a weekly turn. Those girls who do not go to Mass every day shall say their Rosary every day, at different times during the day; that is, a decade after morning prayers, two decades after Grace at dinnertime, and two decades after Grace at suppertime.

A.66 - (ON THE NECESSITY OF ACCEPTING CHANGES)¹

The first reason that obliges the Daughters of Charity to accept changes of place, persons and duties is the respect that they owe to the example of the Son of God who acted in this way.

The second is that such changes can and must occur. If they are not

1. Thoughts prepared for a Conference, possibly that of June 6, 1656 on Indifference.

accepted, we shall never enjoy the peace of soul that is essential if we are to please God and to accomplish His holy will.

The third reason is that the sisters must take into consideration the difficulties that Superiors encounter in trying to please everyone; in finding Daughters of Charity to send to serve the poor in places where they have been requested; in trying to avoid the many inconveniences that may arise.

If the sisters are not willing to accept changes in all these circumstances, they are in danger of committing many faults. If it is a sister who has been changed so that another may be sent in her place, if she is dissatisfied with her replacement or has heard rumors about her, she will not welcome her cheerfully and cordially. No kind words will be exchanged and there would be reason to believe that once they are together they will be in continual disagreement. In such instances, it is extremely difficult not to reveal one's feelings and matters may progress to such a point that, in conversation with the Ladies, the evil spirit might suggest words that are harmful to our sister.

Another evil is the disedification that we would give to our neighbor. Moreover we would find ourselves in the impossibility of faithfully practicing our Rules and we would be in danger of losing our vocation. There are an infinite number of other evils which would befall us but which are too lengthy to mention here.

A.45. - (ADVICE REQUESTED FROM MONSIEUR VINCENT)

December 30, 1656

After I had recovered from my most recent serious illness in the month of . . . of the present year, I asked Monsieur Vincent, our Most Honored Superior and Founder, with what dispositions I should once again take the resolution to live.

In addition to giving me other counsels which were in conformity with the holy will of God, his Charity told me that I should do this with the determination to deny myself any satisfaction and to renounce myself by refusing all that is agreeable to my senses and passions so as to honor the practice of the Son of God in the use that He made of occasions for renunciation. During the illness which followed my fall, I wanted to discover the means that I should employ to help another person to know her faults. I told my Most Honored Father that this desire had led me to point out her failings to her and that I realized that my admonitions appeared to have profited her very little.

His Charity told me that we must put up with a great deal and rely more on God than on our own means. He said, "Pray tell, who are we to think that we can undertake such a difficult and important task?" This remark made me understand that I had been hasty in my zeal and that my own passions had sometimes come into play. It also taught me that I should serve souls in their needs by another practice, that of turning to God by an interior act of confidence and trusting Him to accomplish by His grace and goodness all that I could not do. This seemed to be a more efficacious means.

I then spoke to his Charity of the direction of our sisters with their diverse personalities and employments and the liberty they have because they are in so many different places. In his kindness, his Charity told me, among other things, that direction is a gift which must be obtained through patience. This led me to understand that we must not always let others know that we have noticed their faults. Moreover, we must overcome our repugnances in putting up with them, especially when they are minor, and be careful not to allow ourselves to yield to sudden emotion which might cause us to resolve, in our direction, to rid ourselves of the services of some sisters for whom we must always . . .

A.32 - (ON THE VIRTUES OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN)

Her conception which God made immaculate in anticipation of the merits of the life of her Son.

All the graces infused into her soul because of the choice which God made of her to be His mother.

Her birth; her most pure life dedicated to the service of the Temple; and her vow of virginity.

Her marriage; her submission and dependence; her trust in Divine Providence; her tranquility; the inexhaustible spring of all the virtues of her beautiful soul during her marriage, sustained as she was by her great humility which kept ever before her eyes the work which God was accomplishing in her.

Her complete detachment and the sweet tranquility of her soul during the passion and death of her Son.

Her renunciation of all things and her willingness to remain on earth after the Ascension of her Son because of her pure love of God and her zeal for the salvation of souls, for which she labored for the remainder of her life, thereby imitating perfectly the Spirit of her Son.

I offer You, O my God, all the glory which You will receive forevermore from the beatitude of this most holy soul which You have

rendered extraordinarily capable of experiencing the plenitude of Your divinity.

Blessed is this heart filled with love which, by the interior sufferings of her soul, brought death to her body laden with merit.

May her soul, chosen among thousands of millions, be glorified for all eternity because of her total acceptance of the plan of God.

May this precious body, united to so worthy a soul, be forever glorified because of the testimony of love which the Blessed Trinity will show to it throughout eternity.

M.70 - (ON CONFESSION)

We must open our minds to a true understanding of the sacrament of Penance and weigh very seriously our motives for approaching it. Since this sacrament can be applied only to sinful souls, we must recognize and acknowledge ourselves as such before receiving it. We must also admit that we have rejected the grace of God which is an unbearable evil for the truly Christian soul. Once we are fully aware of our state and realize that confession is the only remedy for our great affliction, we should carefully examine our conscience. We must then conceive a holy hatred for ourselves because we have been so irrational as to oppose God who has always been so good to us and who of Himself merits infinite honor. This self-hatred should lead to filial regret for having offended God and the firm resolution to overcome ourselves and to avoid the occasions which so frequently cause us to fall into sin. Above all, we must recognize that of ourselves we can do nothing to avoid sin and make an act of loving confidence which will move us to ask God for the grace to desire to please Him more earnestly in the future. To this end, we must pray for the grace to avoid even the smallest failings so that we may love God for Himself alone.

Once we have entered into these dispositions, with a heart filled with shame, we should present ourselves at the feet of the priest as before a judge. After accusing ourselves of our sins simply and humbly, we should await absolution in fear and in hope. We should receive it with admiration, reflecting that the great love of God for us has willed that the remembrance of the cruel death of His Son merit pardon for our sins.

**A.26 - (REASONS FOR GIVING ONESELF TO GOD IN ORDER
TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT)**

1657

The first subject of my meditation is my powerlessness to enter into prayer because of my attachment to myself.

Considering myself as belonging to God because He is God and because He created me, which are the two foundations of His proprietorship over me, I saw that I belonged to Him also because He preserves me. This preservation is the support of my being and a sort of continuous creation. I then asked myself what I intended to do so as to give myself to Him. I saw that His power to possess me was, by the excellence of the divine plan in the creation of the human race, to be found in His close, eternal union with His creatures. He brought this about through the unique means that He possessed which was the Incarnation of His Word. As perfect man, the Son willed that human nature should participate in the Divinity through His merit and through the close union of His nature with the Father. Oh, what wonders are seen in heaven in souls that have given themselves to God in the only way possible, which is by means of the gift of their free wills which they make use of exclusively as belonging to Him!

Oh, excellence of souls that are free, that no longer belong to themselves, of souls that act in all their thoughts, desires and deeds in conformity with the justice of God, of souls that find nothing so reasonable, so beneficial or so just as to give themselves to God!

What love, what a unique gesture on the part of God, to make known His omnipotence in this unequalled way! He willed His creatures to be so closely united to their Creator that they would be one with Him in matters related to them. Confusion for failures in this regard—entire oblation—distrust of self—resolution to do better in the future.

Second meditation on the second reason for giving myself to God so as to dispose myself to participate in the reception of the Holy Spirit, which is the loss I would suffer and the harm I would incur if I did not do so.

One of the greatest losses that a soul can experience by not participating in the coming of the Holy Spirit is that the gifts infused at Baptism do not have their effect, which leads us to see the truth of the warning

of Our Lord to cowardly and lazy souls that, not only would they receive nothing, but what they have will be taken from them. This means placing ourselves by our misery in such a state of powerlessness that even grace can do nothing for us. Oh, how many times have I been in this condition, thus removing myself from the order of the designs of God, which are great for those to whom He sends the Holy Spirit. This made me realize that all the disorders of life are caused by the failure to give oneself to God so as to receive the Holy Spirit. The lack of these gifts is apparent in the strange difference in comportment between persons who are animated by them and those who are not. The actions of the latter are earthy and unreasonable as is often my case on account of my misery. I have experienced this too often in the disorder of my senses and passions.

What means are to be employed and what dispositions are necessary in order to participate in the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The first one that occurred to me was that Our Lord told His Apostles that He had to leave them so as to return to the Father and to send them the Holy Spirit. This taught me that I must be completely detached from all creatures and even from the Divine Presence so that my soul may be empty of all obstacles and the Holy Spirit may fill it with His presence and gifts which will draw me out of my lassitude by the power of His love and cause me to act by His strength.

Therefore, it is not enough for You, O Lord, to have taught me the means for disposing myself for the coming of the Holy Spirit. I must also labor diligently, O my soul, to remove all obstacles and to act, or better, to let the grace, with which the Holy Spirit wills to fill all the powers of my being, act in me. This can only come about by the destruction of the evil habits which, on diverse occasions, hinder His action in me.

O Eternal Light, lift my blindness! O Perfect Unity, create in me simplicity of being! Humble my heart to receive Your graces. May the power to love which You have placed in my soul no longer stop at the disorder of my self-sufficiency which, in reality, is but powerlessness and an obstacle to the pure love which I must have as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Confusion then for myself because of my errors which have often attached me to falsehood and led me to abandon eternal truth. Consume all that, O Fire of Divine Love, although I do not merit this grace.

The subject of this meditation is a continuation of the preceding one on the means and dispositions necessary in order to participate in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The first seemed to me to be the esteem that we must have for this gift both with regard to its greatness and to the benefits and the eternal honor that we will derive from it. Is there anything more excellent in heaven or on earth than this treasure? How is it possible to live a disorderly life after having given oneself entirely to be open to this infinite good? Should I not desire, O my God, to die upon receiving it? To live for as long as it pleases You, but with Your life which is one of total love. May I not, beginning in this world, flow into the ocean of Your Divine Being? Should I be so fortunate as to receive the Holy Spirit, oh, how I must desire this with my whole heart!

No longer to walk any path but this one; no other satisfaction but that of loving and of willing Your good pleasure.

You still see weaknesses in me in my desire for the affection of creatures. Consume this, O Ardent Fire of Divine Love! By the power of Your grace, weaken my passions and the use I make of my senses so that, by my powerlessness, I may render You the honor which my will was unable to exact from their fury, and which I have always owed to You. I reject, with all my heart, my excessive abruptness which I renounce forevermore, whatever the temptation that may come to me from the world, the flesh, or the devil. At least, I shall do so if I am so fortunate that the Holy Spirit will deign, by the Divine Goodness, to come into my soul and to restore in it the graces with which Your goodness filled it at my Baptism. Eternal Father, I beg this mercy of You in the name of the design which You had from all eternity in the Incarnation of Your Son and through His merits. My Savior, grant me this grace for the love which you bear for the Holy Virgin. Holy Spirit, operate this marvel in your unworthy subject by the loving union which You have from all eternity with the Father and the Son.

Subjects of meditation for the third day: Signs of having participated in the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I reflected that the Person of the Holy Spirit is in the divine essence. I saw the Spirit as the perfect bond among the three Persons in the unity of the Trinity. I recalled the glory which the Church so frequently renders to this unity at the end of the psalms. Then, I spent a long while considering this truth: that the Godhead can be truly honored only by His own eternal glory. I saw that one of the effects of the Holy Spirit in God is union. I recalled the design of God in creating man to His image

and likeness. I considered in this His three excellent faculties of which two are ordered to the third which is the will. On account of this resemblance, it seemed to me that each Person of the Blessed Trinity operated in each of these faculties, and that the Holy Spirit, by means of His unitive power, gives the will the facility to unite perfectly so that there is no disorder in the soul. This would restore it permanently to the excellence of its first state at the time of creation, making it a participant in this first glory which honors the eternal glory of God after the abundant Redemption for sin. My mind recalled the thought that I had had: that the design of the Blessed Trinity from the creation of man was that the Word should become flesh so that human nature might attain the excellence of being that God willed to give to man by the eternal union that He willed between Himself and His creature, the most admirable state of His exterior operations.

My meditation was more reflective than reasoning. I felt a great attraction for the holy humanity of Our Lord and I desired to honor and imitate it insofar as I was able in the person of the poor and of all my neighbors. I had read somewhere that He had taught us charity to make up for our powerlessness to render any service to His person. This touched my heart very particularly and very intimately.

The subject of my sixth meditation was the marks which Our Lord gives so that one may know if one has received the Holy Spirit.

The strong and tender love of Our Lord appeared clearly when He told His Apostles of the consolation that the coming of the Holy Spirit would afford them. He revealed the two forms that this consolation would take. The first was that the Holy Spirit would bear witness to Him. O my Savior, had You not given them enough by Your words and works both during Your lifetime and after Your Resurrection? What more could the Spirit of Consolation, whom the Father would send by You, do for them? O profound and inscrutable secret! O Trinity perfect in power, wisdom, and love! You bring to completion the work of founding the Holy Church. You desire her to be the Mother of all believers. To this end, You console her by instructing and strengthening her in the truths which the Incarnate Word had taught her. You infused into this Mystical Body the union of your works, giving her the power to perform miracles so as to enable her to bring to souls the true witness which You willed her to bear to Your Son. You operated in them holiness of life by the merits of the Word Incarnate. The Holy Spirit, by means of His unitive love, associates Himself to this action in order to produce the same effects by His coming. He thus renders to men the proof of the divinity and

perfect manhood of Christ which should be for all a source of joy, emulation, and true detachment from worldly affections so as to form oneself according to His holy and divine actions which should lead to the resolution to live as reasonable human beings. I believe that this is what Our Lord wished to convey to His Apostles when He told them that, after the coming of the Holy Spirit, they would also bear witness to Him. This is what all Christians must do, not by bearing witness to the doctrine of Christ, which is the prerogative of apostolic men, but by the perfect actions of true Christians. Blessed are those persons who, under the guidance of Divine Providence, are called upon to continue the ordinary practices of the life of the Son of God through the exercise of charity.

O Holy Spirit, you alone can enlighten us concerning the greatness of this mystery which, if one can say such a thing, reveals the impatience of God seen in the promptness with which He carried out His design on human nature for the perfection of the union which His omnipotence wished to operate in it. O creatures blinded by trifles, and I more than any other! Let us lift our spirits, not above what we are in the plan of God, that would be impossible, but above our natural inclinations which are due to the corruption of sin, so that in all our actions we may honor Our Lord by the witness He wishes us to bear to Him by performing the actions which He accomplished on earth and to which, on account of His love for us, He will apply the merits of His own. He wills by this means that Christians experience in this life that union with God which He has merited for us.

To this end, I shall strive, with the help of His grace, to overcome my sloth and to make use of a practice which was recommended in a reading: to look upon all the occasions for doing some good for my neighbor not only in terms of the recompense which Our Lord has promised to me because He considers such acts as done to Himself, but also in light of the fact that the neighbor has been given to me in the place of Our Lord, by means of a love which His goodness knows and which He has revealed to my heart, although I am unable to put it into words.

I shall also make use of a thought which His goodness gave me at a moment when I was distracted by a vain consideration; namely, that when I am seen accomplishing some good deed, I shall develop the habit of calling to mind the belief that God and His angels are watching me.

M.72 - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

Three moments are of great importance if we wish to receive Holy Communion well. The first is the period before Communion; the second

is the moment of the reception of Communion; the third is the time which follows.

During the preliminary period, we should prayerfully reflect on what Holy Communion is and who should communicate. Let us recall that faith teaches us that it is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the unity of His essence. This realization should produce in us the respect that the creature owes the Creator, recognition of our dependence upon God and our own nothingness without Him, and a great desire to receive Him.

We must try to discover in God some motive for this admirable and, in a human sense, incomprehensible action. Since there is no apparent reason, other than His pure love, we must render honor and glory to God by acts of praise, adoration, love, and gratitude for His loving invention which unites Him to us. At times, we should ask Him if becoming man was not sufficient to win our hearts completely. At others, we should seek to discover what there is in us that He wanted to acquire at so high a price and offer it to Him.

The awareness of the dignity of this most Holy Sacrament should make us realize our powerlessness to prepare adequately to receive Him. Thus, we must turn to the Spirit of Love, the Holy Spirit, who furnished this gift, and beg Him to come into our hearts and to fill them with the dispositions necessary to honor the presence of such a Lord.

Sometimes, we should place before the Blessed Trinity all that the divine omnipotence has effected in us and ask the Triune God to take possession of all that is rightly His and to make use of us as He sees fit.

At other times, we should offer to God the good dispositions of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints with the desire of imitating them so that we may more worthily receive Our Lord. We should do this by simple acts of our understanding and will which produce interior movements of love. However, we must preserve our souls in peace and await, with joy, the coming of Our Lord whom we must desire as the beloved of our souls.

As we reflect on those who should communicate frequently, we should humble ourselves greatly since it should be persons who are completely detached from all things, who have great love for God, and who shrink from nothing on the pathway of holy love.

The second important time for us, if we wish to communicate well, is the moment of the reception of Holy Communion. After the preceding acts have placed our souls in peace and tranquility, we must receive our God, our King and our Spouse, in this most august sacrament. We must offer to Him acts of adoration, dependence, confidence, and abandonment of all that we are, begging Him to take possession of our being. We must unite ourselves to our Spouse to accomplish His will by means of numerous acts of love, being particularly attentive to those qualities

in Him which call forth our love, especially His real presence within us. We must seek to discern what He wishes to accomplish within us, although we cannot see it.

The time following the reception of Holy Communion must be marked by a continuation of similar sentiments and acts. We must remain attentive to the divine presence and express our gratitude, sometimes to the Godhead, sometimes to each Person separately, according to His attributes. We should rejoice in contemplating this admirable invention and the loving union by which God, seeing Himself in us, makes us, once again, like unto Him. This He does by communicating not only His grace but Himself. He thus effectively bestows upon us the merits of His life and death, thereby giving us the capacity to live in Him as He lives in us.

We can bring great simplicity to this time after the reception of Holy Communion. It is a time for thanking God by our desire to honor Him in all the actions of our lives. It is a time, also, for offering Him all the glory due to Him as God, all that He will eternally receive from the holy humanity of His Son, and all that will be rendered to Him by the blessed in heaven. This total offering can constitute an act of thanksgiving for all the benefits we have received from His divine liberality toward us.

A.61 - (ON THE CARE THAT THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY MUST TAKE TO PRESERVE THEIR COMPANY)

The first reason is the eternal and inevitable misfortune due those who, on account of their malice, would cause the ruin or loss of a work which God, in His Providence, had established, as He seems to have done in the case of the Company.

The second is the loss that would be suffered by the many persons who will be called to the Company if it subsists. Should it perish, this could not be accomplished.

The third reason is the spiritual and physical harm that would befall so many poor persons were the Company to cease to exist, since they would be assisted only by the members of this Company unless God were to raise up another like it.

The fourth reason is the offense that each sister would commit against God if, through her wretched pride, she were to oppose His holy will in establishing the Company of the Daughters of Charity by doing things that would lead to the complete ruin and loss of the aforementioned Company.

Part II

There are many faults which the sisters might commit that could bring about the total ruin of the Company.

One of the principal offenses is to have little esteem for the manner in which the practice of the Rule calls upon the Daughters of Charity to comport themselves in all their actions.

Another is not to make known the coldness which our self-love causes us to feel for our vocation.

Another very dangerous failing is carelessness when speaking of our sisters. This could happen when the occasion presents itself to discuss what is happening in the Company, either to individuals or to the entire group, especially in matters related to the missioning of a sister who may have experienced an aversion or some repugnance for her companion. Often, it is for one who has reproved her or who desires to be very exact in fulfilling all her obligations. This could lead to criticism and blame. Sisters being sent to live with those who have been the object of such criticism are pitied. Thus, they are led to believe that the distaste that they feel for their vocation is due to the diverse dispositions of the sisters in the house where they have been placed when, in reality, it is the result of their own immortification and affection for the world as well as of the initial temptation to withdraw which they failed to reveal and concealed from their Superiors.

Since the majority of those who enter the Company are not in the habit of conversing with persons of rank, nor are they used to handling money or to possessing little things which are now freely obtainable, there is another danger which is greatly to be feared, namely, that as they become accustomed to working with the rich and the influential they may take advantage of the situation and, by forgetting the respect that they owe them, become so impudent that they are no longer bearable. Moreover, the management of money gives them the opportunity to appropriate some of it for themselves or to use it as their impulses dictate by purchasing useless objects because they have seen others with them. They might even show preferences and give some money to their relatives or others, taken not only from their resources but from the goods of the poor. Familiarity with the Ladies might lead some sisters who are already wavering and losing the affection that they should have for their vocation to obtain funds from them to give to those whom they know are ready to leave the Company.

The means for preventing the destruction of the Company on account of these dangers is to practice our Rules faithfully by observing both their general spirit and their particular recommendations, especially:

To avoid flattery and conversation with externs.

To be careful not to linger anywhere for longer than is necessary.

To avoid completely conversations with men and flattery from them.
To try to return to the house early in the evening.

A.18 - (THE DESIRE TO IMITATE OUR LORD AT HIS DEATH)

August 16, 1658

On Monday, during the reception of Holy Communion, I suddenly felt moved by the desire that Our Lord should come to me and communicate His virtues to me. Prior to this, I seemed to experience shame for the ill-use I had made of the honor of receiving Him.

Since the subject of our morning meditation that day had been the signs which appeared at the moment of Our Savior's death, I asked Him to effect two in me. I desired firstly, that the veil of the temple, which I saw as my understanding, should be torn so that I would no longer cling to my own judgment, and secondly, that my stony heart should be rent by gentleness and support for my neighbor.

As a means for attaining this, I thought that I must turn to the example of Our Lord during the final moments of His life. Here I was instructed by His last words, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," which taught me that I should do nothing of consequence without this disposition. His final action was to incline His head, thereby showing me that I must not notice so many things and must humbly acquiesce to others.

M.73 - (ON THE INTERIOR SPIRIT NECESSARY FOR THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY)

It seems to me that our interior conversation with God should consist in the continuous remembrance of His holy presence. We must adore Him every hour and make acts of love for His goodness, recalling, as far as possible, the thoughts that we received during meditation so that we may correct our faults and advance in this same holy love.

On all those occasions which are painful to our senses, we must consider the paternal goodness of God. Like a good Father, He allows the rod of His divine justice to touch us, sometimes to correct us and at other times to show us His great love by allowing us to share in the sufferings of His Son so that we may likewise share in His merits. Let us, therefore, make acts of thanksgiving.

When pleasant things happen to us or when our undertakings succeed as we wish them to, before abandoning ourselves to the joy of the moment, let us glance interiorly toward God and thank Him for His mercy since it is His love alone which affords us this consolation. Therefore, let us accept it in this light by an act of love.

We must strive to use all the things that strike our senses as means to raise our minds to God. We should consider them as coming from His all-powerful hand or we should reflect on His design in creating them, which is almost always for the benefit of the human race so that it will be grateful to Him.

At other times, we should ponder the excellence of the being which God has given to us so that we may raise ourselves above the lowliness toward which our corrupted nature draws us through our affection for so many things which do not deserve to occupy our minds. Consequently, let us cry out that all that we desire on earth is God.

Sometimes we are under pressure, and it seems to us that we urgently need and hope for help from others. However, we are disappointed. This happens either through the conduct of Divine Providence or because of human weakness. We must then look immediately to the will of God and accept it in this situation. We should raise our minds to God and depend only on Him, remembering that, from all eternity, He has been and is sufficient to Himself; consequently, He can and should be sufficient for us. Since we are so fortunate as to be in a state of life in which He is to be our only consolation, we must lovingly accept the privation of all that we lack, although we consider certain things as essential for us. Let us remain in intimate peace with God without complaining of creatures who would not be a subject of trial to us if God did not permit it. We must strive to keep our minds closely united to God. Such acts must stem from our wills. Therefore, I think that it is an excellent means of keeping our minds directed toward God as is His good pleasure.

In all the situations that we have mentioned, we must develop the practice of making frequent acts of the desire to know God and ourselves. This will lead us to make the repeated acts of love which we owe Him and to avoid anything that is displeasing to Him. We must often abandon ourselves to Him; show Him our hearts filled with trust and gratitude; and try, from time to time, to whisper ejaculatory prayers to Him.

A.27 - ON THE PURE LOVE WE HAVE VOWED TO GOD

John 12:28-35

"Father, glorify your name!"

Then a voice came from the sky:

"I have glorified it,

and will glorify it again."

When the crowd of bystanders heard the voice, they said it was thunder. Others maintained, "An angel was speaking to him." Jesus answered, "That voice did not come for my sake, but for yours."

"Now has judgment come upon this world,

now will this world's prince be driven out,

and I—once I am lifted up from earth—

will draw all men to myself."

(This statement indicated the sort of death he had to die.) The crowd objected to his words: "We have heard it said in the law that the Messiah is to remain forever. How can you claim that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Just who is this 'Son of Man'?"

My very dear Sisters and all souls that aspire to the perfection of pure divine love, these are the words of our beloved Master and Spouse who teaches us thereby that we may hope for this and that such aspirations are in keeping with His plan as seen in the attraction that He will exert when He is raised up from the earth.

Let us admire the means that He took to make these words more efficacious and to enable us to understand that they are addressed to all chosen souls. He spoke to the entire crowd of people who were following Him and He addressed words to His Father in their presence that should delight us all. He asked that His Father's name be eternally glorified by great love.

The Father answered with a sign to show that it was, indeed, His Son who was speaking and that He had the power to fulfill His promises. The people recognized Our Lord as truly the Christ, but they asked Him who the Son of Man was since He had said that He would die and be raised up from the earth.

Was anything more needed, O my dear Spouse, so that You might be recognized? How is it that vanity prevailed and still prevails over truth? Let us be more courageous, my dear Sisters, and let us accomplish, insofar as we are able, the words God addressed to His Son when He said that His name would be glorified. May this come about through the effect of Jesus' words when He promised that He would draw all to Himself when He was lifted up. This gives dominion over all things to the Creator of all things, as is only just.

Is it not glorious for souls to cooperate with God in carrying out this

plan? Let us, therefore, submit ourselves to the will of our Well-Beloved so that His words may be fulfilled in us.

What will become of us if, seeing Him raised up and desiring to draw us to Himself, we are so attached to earth that the weight of our misguided affections prevails over the attraction of His pure love?

Draw us, therefore, O my Lord, and we shall run; and the fragrance of Your perfumes will hold us so firmly that nothing will be capable of separating us from Your charity.

You desire to draw all to Yourself. Teach us truly to understand these words. If we belong to You, we can no longer belong to ourselves. If we believe that we are Yours, would it not be stealing to use ourselves and to live ever so slightly at variance with the precepts of the pure love which You taught us on earth?

Once we have completely yielded our wills to the purity of Your holy love, our lives must be spent entirely in the observance of the rule given to us by our Beloved from the moment that He was lifted up until His death.

Let us take the first step in following Him which is to exclaim, "I desire it thus, my dear Spouse, I desire it thus. As proof thereof, I am going to follow You to the foot of Your Cross which I choose as my cloister. There, I shall leave behind all earthly affections because Your voice has called me and urged my heart to forget my people and my father's house so as to be open to Your great love. Therefore, at the foot of this holy, sacred and adored Cross, I sacrifice everything that might prevent me from loving, with all the purity that You expect of me, without ever aspiring to any joy other than submission to Your good pleasure and to the laws of Your pure love."

Do not be fearful, my very dear Sisters, even if, in using the word *All*, I am making no exceptions. The thorns on these roses should not prevent you from grasping the bouquet since it will make you most pleasing to your Spouse. The Bride of the *Canticle of Canticles*, whom we should consider as our Abbess, exclaimed, "He is white and scarlet."

Since, at the creation of the world, God taught us that our resemblance to Him was dependent on His love, let us preserve this image within us by means of two eminent perfections: purity, symbolized by the color white, and charity, symbolized by the scarlet of the rose. These colors represent for us the purity and charity of God: His intrinsic purity in the simplicity of His Being and the purity inherent in all the graces that His goodness has communicated and continues to communicate with limitless generosity; the intrinsic love of God who, in the unity of His essence, engendered His Word from all eternity by His omniscience; and the work of the Holy Spirit in producing Their reciprocal love, which love is the Holy Spirit. The love of God for mankind willed that the Son should take human flesh because His delight is to be among His creatures. By

becoming like them, He could bear witness to the fact that God has loved them from all eternity. This He did throughout His human life upon earth.

Therefore, let us love this love and we will thereby grasp its endlessness since it depends in no way on us. Let us often recall all the actions of the life of our Beloved so that we may imitate them. Not content with the love that He bears for all chosen souls, He wishes to have some very cherished ones raised up by the purity of His love.

But, before entering upon this lofty practice, let us admire the goodness of our Spouse, and with the simplicity of the dove that He asks of us, let us question Him to discover if He loves us and if He wants us to love Him.

My Lord, I received a kind of new light concerning the uncommon love that You wish to receive from those whom You choose to exercise the purity of Your love on earth. Look upon this little flock of Yours and see if we may dare to hope for such a thing. It seems that we hold this wish in our hearts. However, the awareness of our weakness, because of our past unfaithfulness, makes us fear that You might reject us. But the thought that You placed no limits on the times that we are to forgive our enemies makes us hope that You will treat us in the same way, and so we believe that You love us.

Yes! You truly love us since You are one with the Father who willed to show us His love by giving us You, His only Son. We are also certain that You want us to love You. Both Your old and Your new law command us to do so. You promise us that Your Father will love us and that You both will come and abide with us if we love You.

O power of love! O admirable treasure hidden in the depths of the soul! O excellence of the creature who knows You! All mankind would take delight in it. Love is the gauge of a glorious eternity of souls called to heaven since, if it is alive in the soul, God will come and make His abode there.

O Pure Love, how I love You! Since You are as strong as death, separate me from all that is contrary to You.

Practice of Pure Love

My Lord, we are at the foot of the Cross where we see You hanging so that we may be drawn to You as You promised. Were not Your word omnipotent, I would fear the weight of my earthly affections. However, You are well aware of this, O my dear Savior, since You requested neither our consent nor our labor. Act resolutely in me and unite my love to Your pure love which triumphs over life.

A.31B - (THOUGHTS ON THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE VIRGIN MARY)

Would to God that I could fully express the thoughts that, in His goodness, He has granted to me on the subject of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, so that the true understanding that I possess of her merits and the desire that I have to render her fitting homage may remain always in my heart.

Thus, reflecting on this Holy Conception, I saw, at one and the same time, the design of God in the Incarnation and its application to the matter that was to form the virginal body of Mary so that, although she was a true daughter of Adam, there was to be no stain of sin in her. This was because in her was to take form the sacred body of the Son of God who could not have satisfied the divine justice by His death had He participated in original sin. The most pure body of the Blessed Virgin is a worthy dwelling place for the soul that God created for her. Both are agreeable to God because, from the moment of her pure Conception, both have been enriched by the merits of the death of her Son.

As into a very precious vessel, more and more graces have been poured into her soul and she has never failed to make good use of them. Therefore, with every good reason, she should be honored by all creatures and served in a particular way by Christians since she is the only pure creature who has always found favor in the eyes of God. This makes her the astonishment of the heavenly court and the admiration of all humanity.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin leads us to realize and to adore the omnipotence of God because grace totally vanquished nature in her. She was saved without ever having been lost, not only through mercy but also through justice, since this was essential for the Incarnation of the Son of God in the eternal plan for the Redemption of mankind. We must, therefore, honor this holy Conception that made her so precious in the eyes of God, and believe that it depends only on us to receive the assistance of the Blessed Virgin in all our needs. This is so because it seems to me that it would be impossible for God to refuse her anything. His divine and loving glance never left her since she always lived according to His will. Therefore, we must be convinced that He is always ready to grant whatever she requests because she asks for nothing that is not for His glory and our good.

We must carefully consider the advantages that the Blessed Virgin has enjoyed over all other creatures as a consequence of her Immaculate Conception. The first is that she never harbored tendencies that could push her to sin. She never knew this evil that dwells in all the children of Adam. Oh, what peace, gentleness, charity and humility there were in the soul of the Virgin since it is this instinct that causes us so much trouble

by leading us into sin.

The knowledge that God gives us of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin should cause us to glorify Him eternally for this masterpiece of His omnipotence in a nature that is purely human. We are also led to admire the beauty of the purity of Our Lady's thoughts. Her mind never indulged in useless thoughts nor was it occupied with sin.

May the frailty of human beings, conceived in sin that leads them to revolt against God, bring to light the honor that the Blessed Virgin rendered to Him by remaining immersed in justice and truth. May souls devoted to the holy and most pure Virgin attentively consider her actions which were never in the least disagreeable to God since they were always accomplished according to His will.

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, therefore, completely enlightened her mind and strengthened her will so that she continually acted in such a way that she never omitted anything that God asked of her. Consequently, she was filled with virtue both in the matter and in the form of the being which God gave to her.

This is why, throughout my life, in time and in eternity, I desire to love and to honor her to the best of my ability by my gratitude to the Blessed Trinity for the choice made of the Holy Virgin to be so closely united to the Divinity. I wish to honor the three Persons separately and also together in the unity of the divine essence.

M.58 - (THE VIRGIN MARY, CO-REDEMPTRIX)

(August 1659)

On August 15, 1659,¹ during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at which I was to receive Holy Communion, I reflected on the greatness of the Blessed Virgin as Mother of the Son of God who desired to honor her to such a degree that we may say that she participated in some way in all the mysteries of His life and that she contributed to His humanity by her virginal blood and milk. Considering her in this light, I congratulated Mary on her excellent dignity which unites her to her Son in the perpetual sacrifice of the Cross, reenacted and offered on our altars.

I also remarked that, by this means, the son of God has, as it were, begotten human nature for Eternity, rendering it capable of enjoying God according to His designs. This appeared to me to be great in heaven where

1. The person copying this passage had written "1660." This date is impossible since Louise de Marillac had died March 15, 1660.

the just contemplate the divine nature and essence, angelic nature, and human nature which, in turn, is also contemplated by the angels and the divinized humanity of Our Lord.

A.100 - (PROBLEMS FOR THE COMPANY)

(1660)¹

The method of teaching used at La Fère is to be feared not only because the sister involved may inject much of herself into it and advance maxims that she cannot explain, but also because public places, such as the rooms in hospitals where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, are used. This could lead others to accuse the Superiors of the Daughters of Charity of allowing the sisters to undertake too much.

There are also other disadvantages. God was pleased to choose village girls for the solid establishment of the Servants of the Sick Poor. Now since this method of instruction is brilliant and sophisticated, if those sisters who have great capabilities were permitted to undertake it but were not dispensed from more lowly tasks, they might, after having been well trained for it, seek dispensations from several exercises and expect better treatment than that given to those in more humble duties. If contradicted in this matter, they would soon leave the Company.

Other sisters would turn to avid reading. In the desire to appear capable, they would devote their attention to learning without taking into consideration other necessary work. Although they have recently arrived in the Company, they would not apply themselves to the practice of mortification. There are already examples of this truth in the Company.

It is said that this work will not continue for a long period of time; that there will not always be sisters capable of undertaking it; that it has the approval of the Pastor and of the Vicar General; and that most of the inhabitants of the city applaud it. This would be acceptable for individuals such as Mademoiselle Pileure or for others whom God might wish to assemble for this purpose.

However, to turn this into an essential function in the Company of the Daughters of Charity would be to enter on the pathway to its destruction. At the very least, it would divide it into two bodies. Those who would judge themselves capable of this employment would be the dominant group and, in their illusions of grandeur, they would fulfill the functions of Saint Mary Magdalen. They would compromise and they would lord it over those employed in visiting the sick. Little by little, poor

1. See Letter 650.

girls would be prevented from entering the Company and the others would soon become ladies. This is already the pretense of several sisters.

It could be objected that one of the main functions of the establishment of the Confraternity and the Company of the Daughters of Charity is the spiritual service of the sick poor. We are all convinced of the truth of this. May God be glorified for it! But does not the grace of God act in all the sisters even the most rustic and simple? In the places where they are located, how many people have been turned away from sin? How many general confessions have been made after years away from this sacrament? How many little girls have been instructed by the sisters in the school? How many persons in the families to which she brings food have also profited from her instruction? How many heretics have been converted since the Daughters of Charity have been working in the hospitals? Recall that, in 1659, a sister who had been in the hospital of Saint-Denis said that, during the year, five or six heretics were converted, including the son of a Protestant minister, without counting several previous conversions. All this was done under a veil of silence. Would to God that it had not been necessary to mention it, since this manner of acting is in keeping with the first commandments of the Founder of the Company, Jesus Christ, speaking through His servant. We are told to honor His hidden life. This is essential for the strength of this Company which, one day, may perhaps have the grace to be employed, not in the city, but in the service of the peasants according to its original end or, rather, according to God's first design for it. This could come about in the course of changes inherent in human history.

Oh, what a happiness, if, without offending God, the Company could be employed only in the service of those who are destitute in all things! To this end, this Company must never depart from nor change its poor manner of life. Thus, should Divine Providence provide them with more than is necessary, let them go to serve the corporally and spiritually poor at their own expense. If this passes unnoticed, what does it matter, so long as souls honor eternally the Redemption of Our Lord?

M.8B - (ON HOLY COMMUNION)

On the Feast of Saint Geneviève, in 1660, as I was receiving Holy Communion, I felt, upon seeing the Sacred Host, an extraordinary thirst which had its origin in the belief that Jesus wanted to give Himself to me in the simplicity of His divine infancy. When I was receiving Him and for a long time afterward, my mind was filled by an interior communication which led me to understand that Jesus was bringing not only Himself to me but also all the merits of His mysteries. This

communication lasted all day. It was not a forced, interior preoccupation. It was rather a presence or a recurrent recollection, as sometimes happens when something is troubling me.

I felt that I was being warned that, since Jesus had given Himself entirely to me, laden with the merits of all these mysteries, I must make use of this occasion to participate in His submission to humiliations.

One means to attain this end is to be found in the fact that, without any cause in me, I appear to others as having received some graces from God. This both humbles me and gives me courage.

No desires, no resolutions. The grace of my God will accomplish in me whatever He wills.

A.49 - PRAYER BEFORE HOLY COMMUNION

Most Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and of the Son, come to purify and to embellish my soul so that it will be agreeable to my Savior and so that I may receive Him for His greater glory and my salvation. I long for You with all my heart, O Bread of Angels. Do not consider my unworthiness which keeps me away from You, but listen only to Your love that has so often invited me to approach You. Give Yourself entirely to me, my God. May Your precious body, Your holy soul, and Your glorious divinity, which I adore in this Holy Sacrament, take complete possession of me.

Sweet Jesus! Gentle Jesus! My God and my All! Have mercy on all souls redeemed by Your precious blood. Inflammé them with the arrow of Your love in order to make them grateful for the love that urged You to give Yourself to us in the Blessed Sacrament.

To this end, I offer You the glory that You enjoy within Yourself from all eternity, and all the graces that You granted the Blessed Virgin and the saints, together with the glory that they will eternally render You by this same love.